

Winter Edition

1928

AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY

THE SLEEPER



Stories by

H.G. Wells

Earle L. Bredon

Miles M. Brewster, M.D.

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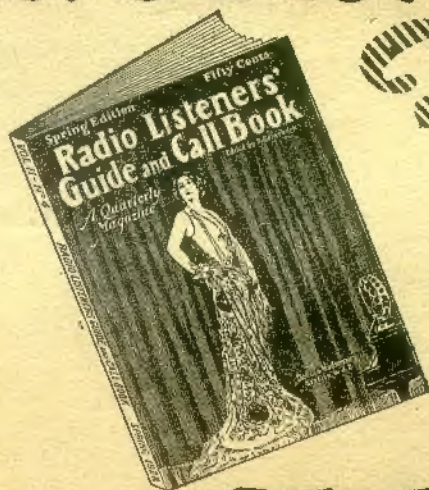


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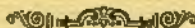
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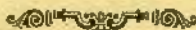
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HUGO
GERNSBACK,
Editor.

PREFACE

IN presenting this, the first AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY, to you, we take it for granted that you are already a regular reader of *Amazing Stories Monthly*. In the two years during which *Amazing Stories* has been published, thousands of readers have voiced the opinion that they would like to see it come out more frequently. Many readers wanted to see it a semi-monthly, and some even wanted it each week. These two suggestions, for production and publishing reasons, however, we have found to be an impractical solution to the problem.

Last summer we issued the *Amazing Stories Annual*, in which was featured "*The Master Mind of Mars*," by Edgar Rice Burroughs. This 50c Annual enjoyed an excellent reception, and brought forth many letters from readers who enjoyed the book, asking us to publish such a book more frequently.

The result is AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY, the first issue of which you now have before you.

The publication dates of AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY will be as follows:

Winter issue	-	-	-	-	-	January 20th
Spring issue	-	-	-	-	-	April 20th
Summer issue	-	-	-	-	-	July 20th
Fall issue	-	-	-	-	-	October 20th

The publication of the Quarterly will not interfere with *Amazing Stories Monthly Magazine*, because the monthly is on the newsstands about the 5th of the month. It is believed that this staggering of the publication date will make the financial burden less heavy on *Amazing Stories* readers.

The Quarterly performs one important duty; it enables us to publish many full length novels, which we know you want, and which, if they were printed in the monthly, would take a good deal of time to publish. It has been the rule of *Amazing Stories Monthly* to publish a full-size novel in three installments. That means, it takes three months before it is completed. We have so many excellent full-length novels on hand which we wish to give our readers that we feel the Quarterly, supplementing the Monthly, will furnish an ideal arrangement.

Since the inception of *Amazing Stories*, a new literature, which we term "Scientifiction," has sprung up, and there are so many excellent short stories, as well as full-length novels, that are at our disposition now, that in the very nature of things, it would take too long if all of them were to be published in the Monthly.

It will furthermore be seen that the Quarterly contains exactly twice as much material as the Monthly, and for that reason we come pretty close to the wish of so many of our readers—namely, to come out twice a month. As far as material and stories are concerned, the Quarterly practically accomplishes this.

Heeding the request of a large number of our readers, we have not included in this Quarterly, any stories that appeared in the regular Monthly publication. All the stories in the Quarterly are brand new, with the exception of "*When the Sleeper Wakes*," by H. G. Wells, and "*The Gravity King*," by Clelland J. Ball.

We have had a great many requests to publish "*When the Sleeper Wakes*," and, since it is one of the foremost books ever written by H. G. Wells, we are convinced that you will welcome its publication—especially because the book is out of print, and is therefore very difficult to get at the present time.

But the big story of the season is undoubtedly "*The Moon of Doom*," a new full-length novel published here for the first time. This is a story that will arouse your interest and, we know, your approval. It is one of the most exciting scientifiction stories we have printed in a year, and it ranks well with the best of such stories anywhere.

Now, after you have read the first issue of the Quarterly, we would very much like to have your reaction to this publication. You will find a voting blank elsewhere in this magazine, which we would ask you to be good enough to fill out.

EDITOR.

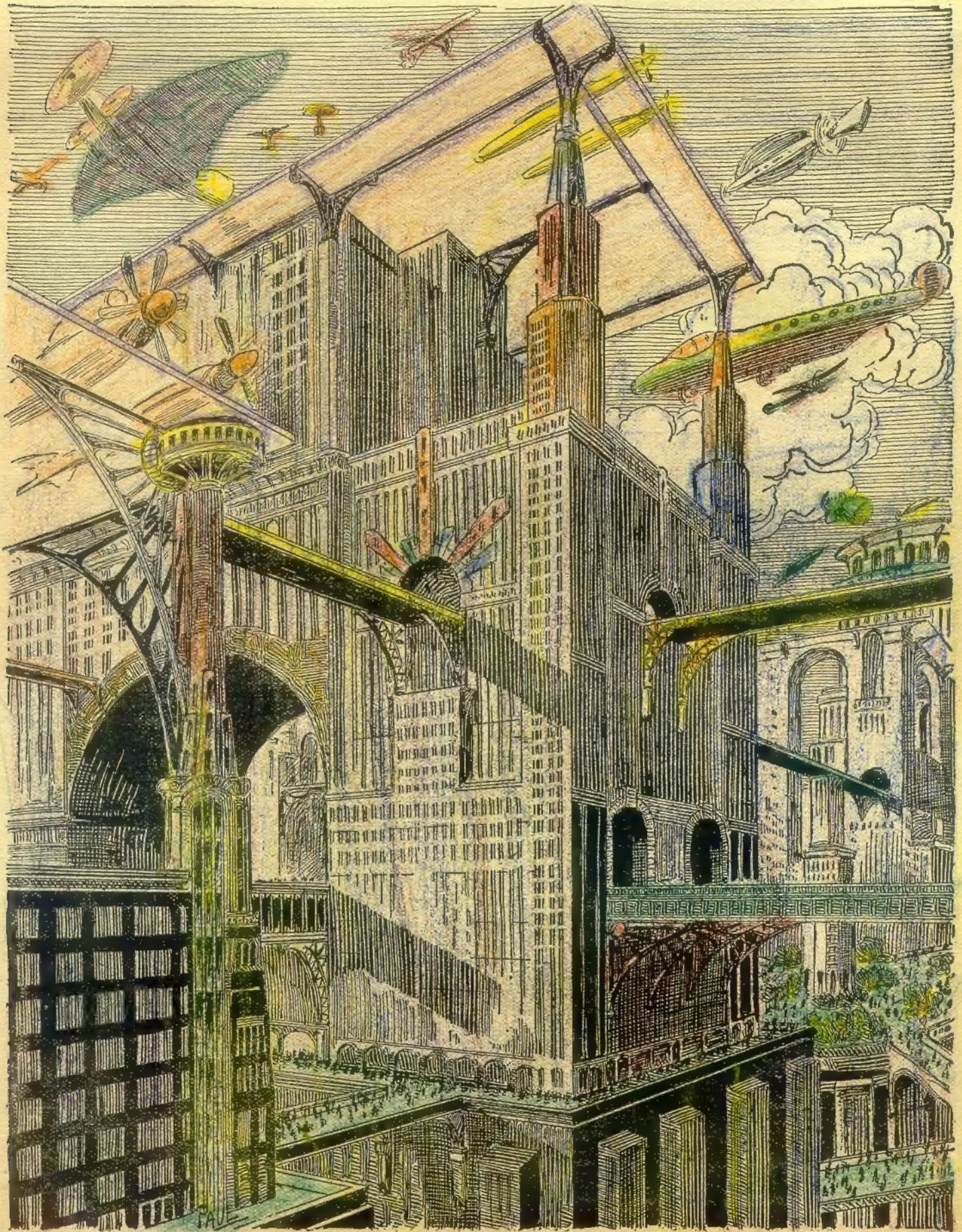
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The MOON OF DOOM

by Earl L. Bell



Giant, bird-like atoplanes filled the air, carrying on much of the world's travel and commerce . . . Many of the older houses and nearly all of the office and industrial buildings had been covered with flat-topped structures affording landing stages.

*It is the very error of the moon
Which comes more near the earth than she was wont
And makes men mad!—Othello.*

CHAPTER I

A Slip In Cosmos



ARTH faced chaos—something was wrong with Time!

For half a week the days had been getting shorter. About a quarter of an hour had been clipped from the twenty-four hours of the day.

Science, confused, could give no satisfactory explanation. It was known that the earth was speeding up on its axis. This alone was certain. As to the cause, a thousand and one theories had been projected from as many sources. Observatories the world over were broadcasting reports so garbled that none could understand, and it wasn't the fault of the wireless, for static had been eliminated many years ago. Astronomy in particular was befogged. The world was speeding up on its axis. This epitomized the myriad suppositions so far as the man on the street could comprehend. What would happen if the acceleration continued? "Chaos," was the answer. Here science had no doubt. *Would it continue?* Science could not say. "We must first determine the cause of the phenomenon," was the somewhat vacuous observation of Professor Josephus Sayre of the Yerkes Observatory, recognized as the greatest astronomer of the age and to whom the world was looking for an answer. And the renowned professor was in a berserker rage because of his impotence in the premises. Science itself was mad.

Other than the shortening of the days, little change had been noted. The east still held the sun's wakening and the west its repose, though there was a fraction less of both daylight and darkness. The stars had lost none of their glory, and each maintained its niche. When the change was first noticed, astronomers had turned their telescopes on the moon, which had been acting strangely for years; but the satellite still hung high in the heavens, apparently following on its usual orbit, though its motion, like that of every other object in the skies, seemed accelerated as a result of the earth's new speed. It was announced from the Berlin Observatory, however, that Luna was shining with unwonted brilliance. The bolometer showed that she was reflecting a little more than the usual one-600,000th part of the sun's midday light but it was agreed that this probably was due to the fact that the atmosphere was at last practically free of smoke.

On the first morning of the change, when it was announced that the sun had risen nearly three minutes late, an incredulous world was inclined to laugh—and did laugh when it learned that the news came from the Burke Station in Colorado. For it was none other than the eccentric Professor Francis Burke, astronomer, hieroglyphist and orator, who had predicted that the tail of the great comet of 1999 would annihilate all life on the globe. And the world laughed louder when it remembered that the day was April First. "Capital!" it

exclaimed. "Professor Burke's Revenge!" "The Aristophanic Astronomer," jibed an editorial in the New York *Banner*. "The Hoax of the Century!" screamed the London *Enquirer*, while the sensational Chicago *Dailytab* issued an extra heralding "Slip in Solar System!" in red type. The sedate Washington *Sentinel* declared editorially that "the publicity-seeking perpetrator of this hoax, who again bids fair to needlessly alarm the world, should be dealt with summarily in a manner fitting the enormity of the intended jest, even though it is All Fools' Day."

So the world, the work-a-day world, the joke-loving world, had its little laugh and went about its affairs as usual. Professor Burke simply had overslept, or his watch was wrong.

But later in the morning, when radio advices from New York, Paris, Berlin and other centers of astronomic learning corroborated the intelligence from the Burke Station, the world woke.

The world woke, but was still skeptical. The sun missing schedule? Impossible! Absurd! Had all the scientists joined in Burke's jest?

And then the climax. Professor Josephus Sayre himself announced that the Yerkes instruments established the sun's delinquency beyond cavil!

It was then that consternation gripped civilization. And on the night of April First, when Professor Sayre was the earliest to announce that the sun had gone down nearly three minutes ahead of schedule, stark terror began to stalk the earth.

Stark terror and bedlam. Science helpless, groping. All races united by the bond of common fear, forgetting everything except the Great Change and asking but one question: "*Is this the end?*" The ferment called humanity more restless than ever. New York, Washington, London, Paris and Berlin broadcasting nothing but the latest observatory dispatches. Newspapers printing "sun news" only. A world interested in nothing else.

Commerce at a standstill. Thousands of telescopes of every magnitude searching the heavens. Awe-stricken millions forgetting how to laugh. Hedonism relegated. Revival of religion. Theology as impotent as science to answer the great query: "*Is this the end?*"

And then, on the evening of the fourth day, when a few seconds more than eighteen minutes had been snatched from the quotidian measure by the unknown hand that mocked the immutability of the universe, came the discovery that staggered the trembling world.

The cause was found by

Professor Ernest Sherard, brilliant young lunarian of Mount Shasta Observatory whose recent discovery of hieroglyphics on the side of Mount Hadley on the moon had been hailed as the astronomic triumph of the century.

Professor Sherard declared that the moon was returning to the earth!

Trigonometrical calculations by other noted astronomers, including Professor Sayre, were made at once and verified Sherard's assertion.

It was then that the world's intellect began to totter. Unreasoning in their madness, the masses fumed at a science that predicted but could not prevent. In the vague hope that something might be done to stop the

WE have no hesitancy in declaring that you will read this tremendous story with bated breath throughout. Here is an interplanetary story that is totally different—one of the best stories of the kind you have ever read. We admit that we, ourselves, could not lay the story aside until we finished it in the wee hours of the morning. The science throughout the story is excellent and in keeping with present-day scientific knowledge, but it is not the science alone that makes this one of the greatest stories of the year. The author possesses the extraordinary skill of arousing your interest and keeping it to the end. It is our hope to publish further stories from the capable pen of Mr. Bell.

satellite, they waited impatiently for further word from Mount Shasta where Ernest Sherard, a man still in his early thirties—a man whose strong face framed a dreamer's eyes—kept feverish vigil at his telescope.

CHAPTER II

The Twenty-First Century

WHAT the world was pleased to call the "true dawn of civilization" had come in the year 2009.

While no catholicon for the world's ills had been found, many had been erased. There had been no wars for half a century. Though commercialism still held sway and avarice was not extinct, men as a whole were devoting more time to art and science, the burden of industry having been lightened greatly by discoveries that had existed only as far-fetched dreams a few decades before. Though the greatest progress had been made in inventions, the science of medicine—surgery in particular—also had made enormous strides. There had been a true renaissance of learning, and knowledge was the Golden Fleece. The work of harnessing the elements had been completed. There were few dark corners left on the globe. Man was pushing ever onward, his face toward the light. He was learning at last how to face life, and there was no such thing as "too much love of living." Suicide was almost a thing of the past. Prisons were few and all but empty. There was work for all, but not too much of it. The dawn of the Golden Age was in the air.

The greatest achievement of the century was the release and control of atomic energy, which was now doing the world's work. The secret had been learned in the Murden laboratories, in 1963. Except for lighting and minor power purposes, electricity had been shelved in limbo. Steam power was only a memory. Giant bird-like atoplanes, made of duralumin, filled the air, carrying on much of the world's travel and commerce. Automobiles, both ponderous and small, constituted the traffic problem in the cities. Colossal atomotors turned the wheels of industry. It was the age of the atom.

The atoplanes were capable of indefinite flight, and the swiftest of them could go two thousand miles an hour. Gargantuan atoliners made daily roundtrips from both Europe and America. Ships had practically vanished from the seas, and railroads from the land. Automobiles, speeding along hard-surfaced roads that radiated everywhere, transported passengers and some of the lighter freight. Most of the passenger travel, however, was in small, privately owned atoplanes which had a speed of about five hundred miles an hour. Every city had its atofield, and many of the older houses and nearly all of the office and industrial buildings had been covered with flat-topped structures affording landing stages, while all of the new buildings were being constructed on this plan. Elevators, opening on the roofs, provided descent into the structures. Equipped with super-helicopters, the machines needed only their own displacement in which to land or rise. Atoheat supplied warmth in all buildings, while all but the smaller dwellings used atolight for illumination.

Atoplanes had carried man to every part of the planet. Excursions in capsule-shaped atoliners to the poles were common. Explorers had made many remarkable discoveries, chief among which was the finding of a temperate valley between epic mountains and glaciers two hundred miles from the North Pole which Amundsen, on his flight across the pole to Alaska in 1926, had barely missed. This valley, earth's newest frontier, had become peopled by the adventurous from all climes. It was named Rogerland for its discoverer, an American, and its chief city was Boreas. Fifty miles long and nearly as wide, the fertile rift now had a population of

nearly half a million. Many strange flora and fauna had been found there.

The principal metamorphosis caused by the development of the atoplane had to do with the redistribution of population in nearly all countries. The population of the large cities had decreased in keeping with the growth of suburban life, while new communities had sprung up like mushrooms, especially on the sides of mountains, the residents flying to and from the cities which were still the centers of industry, education, science, art and amusement.

Another, and probably the most important effect of the utilization of atomic energy was the definite outlawing of war. With universal energy at their disposal, the nations realized that war would mean universal suicide. Twenty years since, the principal governments had adopted the Perpetual Peace Pact, for mutual protection. All armies and navies had been abolished and fighting machinery scrapped, only a few relics having been saved for museums. With the fear of war eliminated, the world had turned its energy toward building a real civilization, and Utopia seemed just around the corner. Nearly every country was a republic. Even Great Britain had given up her king.

The world's news was disseminated almost entirely by radio. With static eliminated, nearly every home had both receiving and sending sets. Telephone and telegraph had disappeared. Newspapers were published only in the large cities, and their news contents were confined mainly to major items which, in the old days, were called bulletins. Their "make-up" was given over largely to editorials and articles written by leading educators, scientists and fictionists, and to advertisements. Through a recent invention by which radiograms were typed directly on the cylinders of the presses, almost immediate dissemination of the news was effected.

Astronomy was perhaps the most popular science. Reflectors with 480-inch specula had been perfected, bringing thousands of new stars to view. Every great observatory was a Mecca for a star-gazing populace. The rudiments of astronomy were taught even in the primary schools and youth was exhibiting keen interest in it, just as the younger generation of three-quarters of a century before had been the most rabid radio devotees.

The powerful reflectors had brought much new planetary knowledge. It was known that the markings on Mars really were cleverly engineered canals, as suggested by Professor Percival Lowell many years before, but that life on the arid globe had been extinct probably 300,000 years. That Venus turned on its axis and that conditions there were favorable to life in many forms was also revealed. The theory that Saturn's mighty rings were composed of huge encircling meteorites, some nearly as large as planetoids, had also been proved. A tenth moon had been found in attendance on the Giant Jupiter. Another discovery was that the midget Mercury turned both faces to the sun. The most distant planets, Uranus and Neptune, were shown to be worlds of ice, whereas it had been believed they were spheres of fire.

But the discovery that occasioned most interest was that made by Professor Sherard, whose invention, a telescopic attachment that concentrated the magnitude of the reflectors, permitting a much more minute study of a small area, had disclosed strange writings on Mount Hadley, one of the moon's largest mountains. Bizarre figures, some a hundred feet high, and weird lettering that no one had been able to decipher, were now visible. It was also thought that mathematical calculations had been carved on the almost perpendicular cliff, but the Sherard concentrator was not powerful enough to make this clear.

That the chiseling was the work of a vanished race, astronomy was certain. The most powerful telescopes

brought the satellite within ten miles, as it were, and its surface was shown to be a fantastic stretch of mountains, craters and plains with an absolute absence of air and water. The origin of the craters was still a mystery, as was the nature of the strange "white rays" which radiated from a few of the principal craters.

The advance of medical science, in the year 2009, had failed to reach a fountain of youth, but had conquered nearly every disease. The span of human life had been lengthened many years and there were thousands of centenarians. Men were at last learning how to delay death by correct living. The Great White Plague was only a memory. Cancer had been the last terror to be vanquished. Prodigious progress had been made in surgery. No longer were the maimed and the blind seen on the streets. New limbs were grafted on the dismembered; the eyes of the newly dead were made to function in the sockets of the sightless, and nearly every other lost or worn out part of the body, heart and brain excepted, was similarly replaced.

Poverty, the mocker of civilization, had vanished. The conflict of labor and capital was no more. Criminals were treated for their sick minds and capital punishment had been outlawed everywhere. Depravity was regarded as insanity. The law of cause and effect was universally recognized.

Mankind was growing up.

CHAPTER III

The Revenge of the Atom

PROFESSOR SHERARD, in his theory as to the cause of the Great Change, which was broadcast everywhere and published in full in every paper, blamed the release of atomic energy.

Atoms, he explained, were the source of the earth's magnetism as well as its energy. The wholesale use of the new power, through the blasting of the atom, had disrupted the finely wrought balance between the earth and the moon. The residue of released energy, instead of returning to its natural state or assuming another form, had gradually enveloped the planet with an invisible but powerful magnetic jacket several miles thick. He cited the enormous increase in the number of meteorites that had entered the earth's atmosphere in recent years as substantiation of his theory. This new magnetism, distinct from the earth's gravitational force, had at last overcome the planet's tidal reaction on the moon, which had been driving the satellite farther into space since the time it became liberated from the nascent earth, and was pulling it back, causing the earth to rotate faster each mile the moon advanced.

The only hope, he said, was that the immediate cessation of atomic energy production might halt the moon and gradually restore the balance.

"But I see little hope even if this is done," he declared dismally. "The pull of the earth has already counteracted the push of the tides and it is probable that nothing we can do will repair the break. It seems that the moon must continue its earthward course until the finish. It is barely possible, however, that the tides themselves may eventually drive it back, or that science will find some way to neutralize or vitiate the atomic envelope. In the latter case, the moon would halt and gradually recede again, due to the tidal reaction. But such a possibility seems very remote. The new magnetism is the ghost of the atom, as it were, and is earthbound, surrounding the globe like a spectral sheet that cannot be unwound. Extensive research in my laboratory has failed to reveal a way by which its influence can be counteracted. All we can do is to return to the use of electricity or some other non-magnetizing agent. The production of atomic energy should be stopped summarily

the world over, and if that fails to undo the Great Change, the earth must pass.

"The moon is now advancing at a rate of about a thousand miles a day. It is now about 235,000 miles away. If its present speed is maintained it will be, of course, two hundred and thirty-five days before it reaches the earth. But its speed will undoubtedly increase each mile, just as a needle moves faster as it nears a magnet. It is known that a needle fairly *jumps* to the magnet when a certain point of attraction is reached, and it is possible that the moon will do likewise when it attains a certain proximity to the earth.

"Science now knows that the moon was once a part of the earth and that it was cast off, as from a breaking flywheel, when the molten planet was rotating at an inconceivable speed. And then, after the earth broke under the centrifugal strain and the moon became a separate body, there was a time when the two spinning spheres almost grazed. At this time, the earth was revolving in about three hours and the moon shared its rotation. But the reaction of the tides—and they must have been immense—caused the moon to recede farther and farther and the earth to slow down correspondingly, the days becoming longer.

"When the earth and the moon were virtually in contact, the day was about three hours long. Up to the time of the Great Change the moon's average distance was about 240,000 miles and the day twenty-four hours long. Taking the average distance as a working basis, this shows that for every 11,428 4-7 miles the moon receded, the day became an hour longer. It is logical to presume that the situation will be reversed as the moon advances—that one hour will be clipped from the twenty-four for every 11,428 4-7 miles until, when the moon has come twenty-one times this distance, it will very nearly, if not actually, touch the earth, which will be rotating in about three hours, the satellite moving with it. But there is a possibility, as previously explained, that the moon will do more than merely graze the earth. The planet's new magnetism may cause the smaller sphere to literally shoot earthward when a *critical nearness* is attained. This will certainly occur if the moon does not stop before it comes within twenty thousand miles.

"But long before that dread collision takes place, it is probable that life on the earth will be extinct. The tides must be reckoned with, even should the globe's mad whirl fail to destroy all living things. By the time the moon has covered two-thirds of the distance, a new glacial age will have begun, and it is likely that the satellite's gravitational force, what with the greatly increased rotation of the earth, will have caused the freezing seas to leave their beds and cover all the world except the higher mountains and some of the higher plateaus.

"Will the world fly to pieces during its travail? I think not. Its crust is solid for many miles, and though its surface may shift, I believe the globe as a whole will remain intact. However, the sphere will groan in its agony and in its weaker spots, its crust will be split and twisted by earthquakes of inconceivable severity. Its topography will be made over almost completely by the churning waters and it will become a domain of ice, even should the threatened collision occur. The globe's warmth will decrease as its velocity increases, due to the shortening of its exposures.

"The end of the world is inevitable, unless science finds some way to banish the new magnetism or some new phenomenon arises to combat its influence. Before another day passes, every producer of atomic energy should be stopped, even to every atoplane and automobile. Every scientist should devote his entire time and energy toward the possible discovery of something that may avert the impending doom."



The moon is only sixty-six thousand miles away. Within a week it will be not less than fifty thousand . . . then its tides will leap higher than our loftiest peaks, many of which will be destroyed by earthquake or undermined by the flood.

CHAPTER IV

The Ferment Oozes Down

ON the day following the broadcasting of Professor Sherard's theory, which was concurred in by nearly all of the leading astronomers, every atomic

engine in Christendom came to a sudden stop, mandates having been issued almost simultaneously by every government. Every atoplane and automobile was parked. Industry and commerce were paralyzed. The world was stunned, silent, like a child stricken speechless with fright. Gone was its gaiety, its pomposity, its cupidity.

Aware of the true import of the Great Change, its tottering reason was temporarily restored. Men talked in hushed whispers, and of one thing only: *the world was coming to an end.*

The quest for fame, the race for fortune—what mattered they now? And science had said that the world was in its youth. How helpless was science, how impotent everything! Yet many believed that in some laboratory, perhaps in some obscure research corner, would be discovered the secret that would restore the cosmic balance. The heavens themselves held the threat of doom, yet some found solace in religion. Many, here and there, went about their work as usual, like Tolstoy's plowman. The Great Ferment was oozing down at last, and men were becoming sober as the bubbles burst.

And in their soberness, in the face of universal disaster, they were united as never before. Hope had not vanished utterly—it would live as long as there was one man left to tread the globe. There still was work for the world to do, so men found time to forget some of their fears in the great sedative called labor.

Every industrial plant in the world was turned immediately into a beehive of activity where men worked day and night converting their discarded atomotors and other atomic engines into electrically propelled machinery that would carry on the world's work until the end. Commerce was still necessary. The distribution of food was a more vital problem than ever.

So within a fortnight, the wheels of industry were whirling again, turned by a force which men had almost forgotten how to use. Electric vehicles of every description, many of them hastily improvised, were pressed into service everywhere, while airplanes of a type of fifty years before flecked the skies. Most of these planes were not suited for inter-continental flight, however; and many electrically driven ships were built. An even more ancient power, steam, was used in some of the maritime craft.

It was realized that these makeshift arrangements could not keep unclogged the arteries of commerce, but with trade restricted to the barest essentials and travel virtually eliminated, they would suffice for the present.

Science, too, had regained its composure. Every laboratory, every observatory, was the scene of sedulous investigation. The magnetic jacket was being studied from every angle in the hope of finding a counter attraction, a de-magnetizing power that would snap the pull of doom. Every reflector and refractor was employed from dawn to dusk, with the ghastly, mocking moon the cynosure of each lens.

Among the most persevering workers were Professors Sherard and Burke, the latter astronomer, who had sprung into worldwide prominence through his discovery of the Great Change, having joined the young wizard of Mount Shasta in his efforts to find a planet-saving clue.

In the little more than two weeks that had elapsed since the change began, the moon had advanced nearly eighteen thousand miles. During the last week a decided gain in its speed had been noted. The satellite's orbit was narrowing every day, the earth was revolving a bit faster with each shortening of the course—and *the day had dwindled to twenty-two hours and forty-three minutes!*

To the naked eye the moon appeared but a trifle larger, though its markings were a little more distinct and its reflected light a vestige brighter. A seeming paradox was that its resemblance to a human face was becoming less distinguishable as its etchings emerged clearer. The principal changes noted through the telescopes were a slight accentuation of its ruggedness and a clearer presentation of its strange "white rays."

The moon's strengthened hold on the tides had become apparent, but not to an alarming degree. Wave-lashed

St. Helena reported the highest tides in the island's history, and the spray was reaching new heights on the rocks of New England's shore and on the shores of the British Isles, but the oceans, as a whole, seemed as placid as ever.

Minor climatic changes also had been noted. With the globe speeding faster on its axis, it was absorbing less of the sun's heat. Winter still lingered in the north temperate regions, while the settlements near the arctic circle reported the severest temperatures in years. And Rogerland, near the North Pole, broadcast the news that its people were becoming alarmed over the movement of the surrounding glaciers, which were threatening to encircle the valley completely.

So the possibility of the earth becoming frigid at an early date struck a new note of terror in the first days of the Great Change. But humanity, which had waxed strangely fatalistic under the moon menace, showed no symptoms of new pandemonium, even when Professor Sherard and other authorities announced that the polar ice fields would probably break loose from their foundations and begin to shift toward the equator within two months.

All kinds of bizarre suggestions for stopping the moon were offered. The one that attracted most attention was that huge atomotors, equipped with dashers, be manufactured by hundreds of thousands and used to churn the seas into tides that might cause the satellite to recede. Churches of all creeds united in supplications and on a specified Sunday prayers ascended simultaneously from more than fifty million lips. Five thousand members of a transcendental sect gathered in Chicago and solemnly declared that man's united will-power could hold the moon in check. Many Islamites believed that Mohammed was returning on the moon, and that it would retreat after coming close enough for his white horse to bring him to Earth.

CHAPTER V

Mildred

ERNEST SHERARD had an assistant other than Professor Burke in his work at Mount Shasta—one who meant more to him than the work itself.

He had met Mildred Reamer six years before, when he was a tyro astronomer.

One night a child, the daughter of the widowed keeper of the tenement where his meagre observatory was located, had climbed to his attic workshop and watched him intently as he nosed his telescope through the dormer window and aimed it at the stars.

"Please, sir, let me look through the big gun," the child asked.

He focused the small but powerful instrument on many-mooned Jupiter and asked the girl to see how many "little stars" she could find around it.

"Oh, God, how beautiful!" the child exclaimed after viewing the planet for a minute. "Oh, God, how beautiful!"

And every following night, as long as he stayed under Mrs. Reamer's roof, the child looked through the "big gun." Evincing an inordinate interest for one so young, she soon learned the names of all the planets and could soon locate the brighter stars and some of the constellations. Attracted by the child's astronomic precocity, the young lunarian spent many hours telling her the secrets of the heavens and pointing out to her, until she could describe them as well as he, the principal features of his favorite object of study, the mystic moon. Mildred became so enraptured in lunar observation that he playfully called her the "Moon Girl." And when he left Mrs. Reamer's house to pursue his work in more pretentious quarters, Mildred was not forgotten. She continued to visit his observatory, learning more and

more about the universe, and after her mother's death, he saw to her education and then engaged her as his secretary and assistant.

And now the "Moon Girl" was burgeoning into the full bloom of young womanhood, radiantly beautiful. His interest in her had grown into adoration, and the time for taking her had almost come. No word of love had been spoken, but Mildred understood.

The Great Change had not frightened the girl. She looked upon it as the Great Adventure. "Of course I hope the moon will hurry back," she said to Ernest one day, "but if it must come on, I hope it comes close enough for us to visit it. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you and I should be the first man and maid to make the trip?"

Ernest caught the twinkle of adventure in her violet eyes and replied: "Only one thing would please me better—to find a way to make the moon go back. Yes, it would be wonderful to reach the satellite and explore its peaks and craters. Maybe we could decipher the strange writing on Mount Hadley, and learn the secret of Tycho's great rays. And the moon may come close enough for such a visit—perhaps too close. Even now the world is dying. The days are getting colder, the ocean more restless. Unless Luna ceases her onward swing, it will be all over in three months."

"Three months!" Mildred exclaimed. "So soon as that?"

"Yes. The ice fields are already beginning to break up, and within a few weeks another glacial age will be upon us in earnest. And then, within three months, the tides will have lashed the oceans from their beds, the icy waters covering nearly all the globe. The greatly increased rotation of the earth and the moving of the ice fields may cause the sphere to shift on its axis. And even though the shift does not come, it is certain that the acceleration will shake the earth to its foundations."

"Chaos," Mildred meditated. "I have often wondered what the end of the world would be like, and have been so wicked as to imagine I would enjoy witnessing it. As a child, I used to picture some comet or other interstellar visitor colliding with our planet. And once I dreamed that the moon fell back upon the earth, and now that very thing is about to happen. Not that I want the world to end, but I have often thought that if such must occur, I would be glad to be living at the time. It would be thrilling, awe-inspiring. I know it is strange that I should feel this way, but it's a part of my nature, I guess. The surge of life within me always seems highest when the elements are most belligerent. The louder the thunder, the brighter the lightning, the more alive I seem to be."

This strange quirk in the girl's make-up was not new to Ernest. She had been an odd child in many ways. Back in the old days when he was a lodger in her mother's home, she often crept up to his attic on stormy nights to view the raging elements from the coign of the dormer window, and would clap her hands in delight at each blinding flash and its resultant reverberation, happiest when the storm was at its worst.

In fine, the girl seemed to find an eerie sort of exhilaration in defying the elements. He recalled an incident that occurred when she was about fourteen years old. He had taken her and her mother to the seashore for a Sunday afternoon outing. A severe storm came up and during the darkness that preceded the gale's fury, the girl, clad in her bathing suit, disappeared. Half an hour later, while the storm was at its ugliest pitch, he found her poised tip-toe atop a beetling crag at the ocean's edge, facing the terrible splendor of the lightning-lashed sky and the storm-tossed sea, her arms outstretched as if to embrace the gale and become a part of it, a look of mingled defiance and happiness on her face. He stood there fully a minute, watching the spray dash

over her lissom form and play with her soft brown hair.

"Oh, God, how wonderful!" the child exclaimed as he took her by the arm. "Let me stay!"

"Mildred, I believe you are the daughter of old Thor himself," he told her as he led her away.

And in that moment he realized that the child was blossoming into maidenhood, and that he loved her . . . even more than she loved the storm.

CHAPTER VI Chaos Beckons

TEN weeks had passed since the beginning of the end—that is, it would have been the middle of June but for the shortening of the days. True to Professor Sherard's prediction, the moon had gained momentum and was now advancing nearly three thousand miles a day. It was less than 125,000 miles away, and nearly ten hours had been deducted from the twenty-four. Shaken by earthquakes of unprecedented violence, the earth seemed unable to bear its travail. Mountain-high tides, lashed to demoniac fury by the moon's terrific pull, were threatening the very heart of the continents. It was a repetition of the Noachian flood, but far more cataclysmic in its terrible grandeur. And over all was spreading the death-cold from the Great White Spaces. The seas were becoming clogged with glaciers, some of which were already upon the continents.

Chaos was beckoning.

Gone was nearly every coast city in the world. New York was one of the first metropolises to vanish. The Florida peninsula had disappeared almost entirely. London and nearly all of the British Isles were under the sea. Earthquakes and tides had combined to submerge the Japanese Isles and much of the coast of Asia, while the tides alone had conquered the coasts of nearly every other continent. It was estimated that about an eighth of the land was already submerged.

Stark terror again, and incipient insanity. Commerce abandoned, forgotten. Men of all bloods fleeing to mountains and plateaus, forgetting everything except the will to live and again asking but one question: "*Is this the end?*" Fleeing by day and by night in a hodge-podge hegira, gazing helplessly, hopelessly at the advancing ogress of the skies, the hideous, gloating moon.

Hundreds of thousands of the inhabitants of small and remote islands had perished when their lands were submerged, and tens of thousands in other parts of the world had died in earthquakes. Japan was literally cracked to pieces before the waters engulfed it, and most of its inhabitants had fled to China. Otherwise, little loss of life had been occasioned by the first convulsions of the Great Change. The frenzy of the seas had, in most places, developed gradually, and the initial exodus from the coast regions was orderly. Less than a hundred lives had been lost in New York. But now, with the waters threatening to reach the plateaus and the ice flows from the arctic advancing, humanity's trek to higher ground was becoming a disorganized, cluttering retreat.

Atoplanes and automobiles of every description had been commandeered by the governments and put back into service to expedite the exodus, the ban on atomic energy being suspended for the emergency, but all means of transportation were proving inadequate and millions of the panic-stricken peoples were making the journey to the interior on foot.

Paris and Berlin still were safe and were the Meccas of millions of gregarious Europeans despite the warning that these cities soon must go. North Americans were scurrying like ants to the Central Plains, notwithstanding the admonition that this would be the first part of the continent to receive the gelid waters from the north and from the ocean's overflow pushing its way up the

Mississippi, and that the western mountain ranges and the higher Appalachians would be their safest refuge. Likewise, the coast inhabitants of South America were moving to the Amazon and Parana lowlands instead of to the Andes; Africans were crowding the Sahara tablelands, ignoring the Atlas Mountains in the North; Australians were migrating to the Western Plateau; Asiatics alone were climbing the mountains, and this because of the interior location of the ranges and plateaus. The Himalayas and the Kuenluns were their main objectives.

The primordial instinct of all animal life to seek safety in flight, and to travel as far as possible from the scene of immediate danger, was asserting itself. In the face of the Great Terror man, the super-animal, was atavistic.

Communication with Rogerland had ceased abruptly two weeks since, and it was believed that the country had been crushed under mountains of ice, the last message having stated that the glaciers, shaken from their bases and set in motion by earthshocks, were closing in rapidly. Many of the inhabitants of this valley had escaped, however, and were reported making their way south through Canada, the people of which country also were joining in the migration to the Central Plains of the United States before the approaching dominion of ice, whose coming was heralded by intense cold.

The chilling blasts from the arctic also had hastened the exodus from the northern parts of Europe and Asia, while far to the south, in the outposts near the antarctic circle, a frenzied trek toward the equator was in progress.

The problem of food distribution was forgotten in the great hegira, and thousands of refugees from every land were dying of hunger and cold.

Wild animal life from the arctic wildernesses also was fleeing before the ice terror, while millions of feathered creatures from both the north and south polar regions were winging their way toward more favorable climes.

And during the great debacle science was as helpless to stop the stampede of humanity as it was to halt the oncoming moon and restore the cosmic equilibrium. Its advice, its admonitions, were for the most part unheeded, though a small minority was listening and proceeding, in orderly manner, to gain the temporary safety of the highlands. These were carrying with them many of the conveniences of civilization, large stores of food, heavy clothing, and equipment for hastily erecting abodes on the lofty land. Already many improvised dwellings were appearing high on the mountains and in some places, principally on the plateaus, communities were being formed, keeping in touch with the rest of the world by radio.

Highways to all of the interior cities of the United States were becoming cluttered with refugees from the coast regions, many of whom were pitching tents or building shacks on the outskirts of the towns. Because of its proximity to the geographical center of the country, Omaha, Nebraska, was becoming the nation's most populous city. The destruction of New York and other large cities on the Atlantic seaboard had at first poured much of the population of this region into Chicago, Detroit and other points in the Great Lakes country, but the cold and the menace of the tides soon drove the wanderers onward again. The vanguard of the second exodus had moved on to Omaha, and the bulk of the hysterical masses followed blindly. Then came the time when earthquakes added to the terrors of the wavelashed Pacific Coast, and the refugees from the west, as gregarious as their eastern brothers, also descended on the Nebraska city, ignoring, en route, Denver and other safer cities high in the Rockies.

Other towns in Nebraska, Kansas and the plains states in general were feeling the effects of the stampede, but

Omaha was the chief camp of the hapless hordes, and was to continue as such until the day of its doom. Humanity, in its supreme peril, was huddling together, helpless and leaderless, but seeking safety in numbers, as of old.

CHAPTER VII

The City of Dementia

THE malefic moon continued to advance and the dizzy parent-sphere to increase its breakneck whirling, the gasping days to shorten, the bitter cold to creep.

And science remained as impotent as on the first day of the Great Change. But science had not abandoned hope, and was trying desperately to restore the reason of a world gone mad . . . Trying in vain.

North Americans continued to flock to the Central Plains. Omaha was the hub of an expanse of souls that stretched nearly fifty miles in every direction in a seething ferment. By day the refugees sought to establish a semblance of order. Tens of thousands of tents and other crude shelter structures were going up each day. Even atoplanes and automobiles were being dismantled and their metal converted into material for shacks. By night the inhabitants of the City of Dementia did little but discuss incoherently the moon menace and gaze at the ever-growing satellite whose beauty now had changed into the loathsomeness of death itself, and try to forget their terror in fitful slumber—and so short had the nights become, there wasn't much time for sleeping; so brief the daylight, night and day seemed one.

The government of the United States was still intact, though the administrative departments had been moved to the resort buildings on Mount Mitchell, the highest peak in eastern America, as soon as the tides threatened Washington. A gigantic radio station had been erected atop the mountain and the government was keeping in touch with the rest of the world and trying to calm its own populace. The President was making impassioned appeals to the people to seek safety elsewhere than on the plains, but his pleas, like those of science, were all but disregarded.

Nearly all the government atoplanes and other vehicles of transportation had been assembled at Asheville and Hendersonville, near Mount Mitchell, and were used to carry food and clothing to the refugees at Omaha and other places. All available supplies of this nature had been commandeered for the purpose.

The suffering in Omaha and its newly acquired environs was intense. Thousands of families had arrived in this false refuge penniless and without provision. Scarcity of water also was being felt. Huge mains were being run from Omaha reservoirs to outlying districts, but the supply was inadequate, and wells were being dug everywhere. The crowded, unsanitary conditions bespoke inevitable epidemics of disease.

The soul of the City of Dementia, like its physical side, defied description. Albert Simmons, noted poet, called the place "The City of Unmasked Men," and this was probably the most expressive epitome. The contentions of science that civilization was only a thin veneer, and that man was his real self only when released completely from social restraints or when facing death, was being proved in a graphic, piteous way.

The soul of man was stripped bare, revealing its paradoxes of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, virtue and vice, hope and despair. Paradox of love and hate, of avarice and benevolence, of vicariousness and selfishness, of spirituality and materialism—such was man in the city of his last stand.

Insanity, perhaps, but sanity, too, is but a thin veneer. And the strangest paradox of all was man's cupidity in his hour of travail, in the face of annihilation.

The peddler crying his wares, the merchant displaying his stock, the millionaire flaunting his wealth—they were there ere the Mecca of Misery was two weeks old. And Shylock, too, was there.

Business as usual! The Omaha newspapers crowding moon news with "closing out" advertisements; the sign of the three balls here and there; "For Sale at World's-End Prices" signs tacked on many a mercantile shack in the crowded, crazy streets; food and clothing commanding fabulous prices; automobile salesmen displaying the newest "electrically equipped" models; men forgetting the moon menace in their inherent desire to accumulate wealth; forgetting the miserable masses around them; forgetting, in measure, their own suffering; selling the very water from the newly dug wells.

And the ubiquitous life insurance man also was on the scene—doing a big business, thank you!

Man was truly mad . . . had always been mad deep in the recesses of his brain where was stored the greed that had its birth when his hairy ancestor, in the first days of the bow and arrow, stocked his cave with meat until the stench drove him out.

Morals, proprieties were almost forgotten in the bedlam. What mattered they now, when every soul was bared? Man was a brute, an abysmal brute, and woman's soul was little fairer. Many and brazen were the painted women; many and shameless the rouses.

But all was not ugly in the great unveiling. If evil predominated, it should be remembered that terror and suffering are cousins germane to insanity, and insanity the true parent of crime. The fact that no man with the *right kind* of brain, with the intellect he *should have*, could be criminal, had long been recognized by both

science and religion. This was the reason why nearly all prisons had evolved into hospitals at the beginning of the Twenty-First Century.

But there were no hospitals for the sick people of the City of Delirium.

The eternal forces of good and evil were still at work. Over the outlying stretches of hunger and misery, away



Ernest started the puissant motors. They were off. "Goodbye, dear world!" cried Mildred. "Farewell, mean macrocosm!" grunted Professor Burke.

from the frenzied trading marts, was held the white hand of charity, and over the forms of those to whom the Great Change had already brought death, were said the gentle prayers of faith and hope. Religion was there, all creeds uniting in the final test. But all these beneficent agencies could do but little to relieve the suffering, banish the terror or restore the sanity of the Great Ferment.

And religion itself, as fear and misery grew, threatened to become fanatic, if not barbarous. A great evangelical leader, unbalanced by the chaos, already was advocating human sacrifices to appease the wrath of the heavens.

Philosophy also was becoming warped, and nearly every man was a philosopher with divergent views. The cold air of night was rent by the strident voices of

these sages who mounted soap-boxes and what-nots to expound their theories as to the Why, the Whence and the Whither.

Stoicism was gaining ground as hope diminished. A familiar figure among the oratorical contingent was a bent and bearded man, clad in winding white like the prophets of old, who would point a bony finger at his auditors and mock: "What if this is the end of the world? You won't know the difference in a thousand years. You're no more than a bag of gnats, anyhow."

CHAPTER VIII

Professor Burke Growls

PROFESSORS Sherard and Burke, from their retreat on Mount Shasta, sent out daily messages to the world, warning the people to flee the valleys and pleading with the inhabitants of the City of Dementia to scatter to the hills. And though these two astronomers were now recognized as the chief savants of the Great Change, their appeals had little effect.

"Let them stop the moon—then we'll listen to them," was the response of the stricken, the doomed, as they continued to mass in the lowlands.

Feverish and almost ceaseless work to find some way to combat the moon-pulling magnetism had overtaxed Ernest Sherard's energy and impaired his health. A nervous collapse had threatened, and Mildred was now nursing him back to normal.

Failure to discover a world-saving force had not visibly perturbed the robust, cynical Professor Francis Burke.

"Maybe the world isn't worth saving, anyway," he growled one day after a particularly promising thread of investigation snapped. "Maybe chaos, annihilation, were better after all. Earth has always been an accursed planet."

"Sour grapes!" Mildred chided.

"Make wine that does Life's sourness dissipate," as Omar Khayyam might have said," he returned.

"Old Omar! He is Ernest's favorite philosopher," Mildred said, turning to Sherard. "But I guess Ernest is losing respect for the Tentmaker now, for it was he who said:

"When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long long while the World shall last!"

"But Omar knew what he was talking about, after all," Burke submitted. "Bear witness the last two lines of the quatrain:

"Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast,"

"Professor, you are as hopeless as ever," Ernest laughed.

"And it strikes me that the world is more so, just now," Burke parried. "Where is the civilization we boasted a few short weeks ago? 'The Age of Intellect.' Bah! The waves pounce on the shores and wipe out a few cities, and civilization reverts to barbarism overnight. Threatened with destruction, humanity is brave as a lot of frightened hares, rational as a bunch of cornered rats, docile as a herd of hyenas! Civilization is not even a thin veneer—it is but a daub of whitewash! And when the whitewash is gone, man stands revealed as the craven coward he has always been when unable to dominate, when faced by the unknown. Stripped of the last vestige of his semi-sanity, he now scurries to the central lowlands, despite all warnings. He still follows the crowd, gregarious to the end! But the globe is singing its swan song and in a few weeks it will all be over—so let the fools go! And after all, why should death on the mountains be preferable to death on the plains? Yes, maybe the fools are right—a month or two

of life doesn't matter when the earth itself is dying. That damned moon! Why did it come to be, in the first place? It has done nothing but grin at Earth since it took its place in the sky. Looks pretty to lovers, eh? Bah! It's gloating over us now, and all the king's horses can't efface its hellish grin."

Professor Burke, still raging, left the room and ascended to the observation room for another look at the sinister satellite. They did not laugh at their companion's outburst—they felt he had voiced the grim truth.

"The Professor is right, as usual, but he's so brutally frank about it," Ernest remarked as he wheeled the lens on the moon. "Were it not so characteristic of him, I'd say that the impending destruction is getting on his nerves. He discovered the Great Change, you know, and I believe he thinks the burden of correcting the trouble lies chiefly on his shoulders. He is one of the most pessimistic men I have ever known, but he didn't mean what he said about the world not being worth saving. In fact, he is the kind of fellow that would not hesitate to give his own life to save a friend. A most unusual character, a bit too gloomy, but one of the greatest astronomers and thinkers in the world. He was right about the folly of trying to beat the Great Change, and death on the plains being no worse than on the hills."

"But you haven't given up all hope," Mildred commented. "You still believe that something may happen to save the world, don't you?"

"Yes, but I don't let my hopes delude me. It has been said, you know, that hope is the world's greatest liar. Something may occur—the moon may fly to pieces. But the doom of humanity seems sealed. A few short weeks will tell the story. The moon will crash into the earth, or the icy death from the oceans will submerge all. Another bubble in the universe will have burst, that's all. They must all burst sooner or later, you know."

"The eternal, ruthless law of change," Mildred sighed. "I like the way it was expressed in a poem I read not long ago:

"Yes, all that is must change and pass away.
Thus speak the falling petals of the rose.
The sun that kisses June's warm lips today
Must glisten soon on bleak December's snows."

"And will you be afraid, Mildred, in the dusk of Earth's last day?"

She smiled into his solicitous gray eyes and replied with another verse of the poem:

"When evening comes and shadows round me creep,
Why should I fear to face the common fate?
Death at its worst is but eternal sleep,—
Perchance it is the road to Eden's gate!"

"The poem is a strange mixture of materialistic melancholy and hope," Ernest commented. "Professor Burke might have written it."

"No, he would have omitted the Eden part, even though it is figurative, for he doesn't believe in the Genesis account. And he would have feared there'd be an Eve in the garden."

"The Professor is a genuine specimen of the genus woman-hater. But he doesn't hate you, Mildred. Only the other day he told me it would make his life worth living to have a daughter like you."

The colloquy ended, they looked once more at the leering lesser light.

CHAPTER IX

The People of the Peaks

WHAT should have been five months had passed since the beginning of the lunar horror. The moon was only seventy-seven thousand miles away. The earth was revolving in less than eight hours. Man

had lost track of time. The calendar was a mockery.

Of the globe's dry surface, only the mountains and some of the higher plateaus remained, and on these peaks and tablelands in every country were crowded about ten million souls—the remnant of humanity.

The civilization which man had been ten thousand years building had vanished almost as completely as though it had never existed. Somewhere beneath the vastitude of heaving, ice-choked waters lay the ruins of every great city that man had caused to be. Each earthly metropolis had become a marine necropolis. Each continent would soon be one with Atlantis. Neptune was chortling.

Congregant to the end, Earth's billions had been caught between the glacial avalanches from the poles and the marching waters from the seven seas. They had remained huddled on the plains until retreat was too late—huddled for warmth as well as through unreasoning fear. And when the oceans, pushing their way up the river valleys had actually reached the plains and the ice mountains were beginning to slither down and into the basins, they had rushed, crazed and achephalous, for higher land. Millions who had escaped the debacle were frozen to death or perished of exhaustion or hunger. And countless other millions were whipped under the flood before they could reach even the foothills.

Of the forty million refugees at Omaha, less than three hundred thousand reached the mountains. They had perished like rats in a flooded sewer; like bagged cats tossed into a creek. Denver was the gathering ground of probably a hundred thousand of the sanest and the fleetest.

And those who had reached the temporary safety of the highlands were in a plight that called to death. Shelterless, almost foodless, hopeless, almost witless, they surged together for mutual warmth and commiseration, gazing alternately, piteously, at the gargoyle hideousness of the moon and the ever-climbing seas.

Terror and suffering had reduced the mass of the stricken to little more than automatons. Man was no longer a thinking creature. His instincts alone survived. He had ceased to ponder over the moon menace, seeming to accept it as something that had always existed. He knew fear, pain and hunger as they were known by the wild things of the field and forest. He was mad, but it was the dumb insanity of an animal tortured into submission. He no longer cared for his kind. He was hungry, and he ate whatever came to hand. He slew, with rocks and clubs the animals that had preceded him to the mountains; devoured their raw flesh and drank their warm blood. He munched the foliage and the roots of trees and shrubs. He was cold, and he sought body warmth of his kind and dug holes in the snow and under the rocks. At first he had made fire from spruce and pine, but so rapid was his retrogression that he forgot how to produce flame within three weeks after reaching the mountains. He had harked back to the troglodyte.

Gone was the grip of greed and vice that had fettered man's soul in the early days of the Great Change. Gone, too, was every virtue save the imperishable one of mother love which, amid the indescribable phantasmagoria of insanity and suffering, still sacrificed itself on the altar of devotion, that pallid babes might live another day.

Gone was everything but the will to live, which is always strongest when life is weakest, and when Erebus claims the mind.

Only a handful of refugees of the last exodus had reached the higher mountains where were pitched the camps of those who fled when the waves first began to wreck the shores. Most of them had stopped on the lower ranges whence further migration was soon blocked by the rapidly ascending seas. Many of the smaller

mountain chains were now almost completely submerged, their peaks rising out of the water like South Sea isles. Hordes of the stricken in the City of Dementia had fled to the nearest mountains, the Ozarks, less than a dozen of whose summits now remained above the water. Others had sought refuge on the loftier Appalachians, but many of these mountains also were quickly submerged and the waters from the Atlantic were now cutting huge gorges through their blue fastnesses as they rushed inland to merge with the flood from the Pacific which, balked at first by the defiant ranges near the coast, now was sweeping through in numerous places as a result of corrosion and of earthquakes which had all but leveled hundreds of snow-crowned monarchs.

The President and his cabinet and the various administrative departments were marooned on Mount Mitchell. The government had long since ceased to function, but was still keeping in communication with the few remaining radio stations of the world, the loftiest observatories and the most altitudinous communities of peak-dwellers.

In striking contrast with the surrounding mental chaos was the status of the pioneers of the great hegira—the small minority who had sought the highest land when science and government first advised. Here the mind of man was keeping its dominion, facing the inevitable with inordinate courage and sanity, striving to maintain order to the last.

These people of the peaks had quickly organized for the work at hand, and their co-operation and foresight had created a cliff-dwelling society of comparative comfort. Coming to the mountains largely in atoplanes and bringing generous stores of concentrated food, clothing and equipment, including many at heaters, they had immediately set about making the most of their desperate situation. Against the time when the glacial weather would envelope the cliffs in a shroud of ice, they soon abandoned their tents and other temporary dwellings and dug deep into the mountainsides where they fashioned large rooms and passageways, using atorays to melt the solid rock. And when the tedious task was over they had equipped their dens with atolights, at heaters and radio sets. Their nourishment consisted principally of canned goods and concentrated food. Water was obtained from the mountain rivulets and later, when these small streams congealed, by melting snow and ice. As a precaution against the time when earthquakes would threaten their dug-outs, forcing them to flee to other peaks, they kept their atoplanes ready for instant service, storing them in specially tunneled "garages."

These arrangements, though entailing many hardships, had staved off actual suffering for many weeks, but the Great Change was not to be outdone. They were now virtually sealed in their cells. No longer did they dare to brave the intense cold of the high altitudes. They crowded round their at heaters through brief days and brief nights, talking in hushed tones, eating their condensed food, and sleeping much of the time like hibernating animals. Every few hours a squad of men armed with atorays and pickaxes, would go to the cavern doors and cut away the ice sheets to provide ventilation, and anon some more rugged cliff-dweller would emerge from the warmth of the caves long enough to train a telescope on the raging, ice-jammed waters below, or to glimpse the bloated, bloodshot moon.

And these people of the peaks were beginning to notice another ominous change: *the very air was vanishing.*

CHAPTER X The Moon Breathes

LUNA, whose praises poets had sung adown the ages, whose light had illumined the eyes of love since love first came to be, had long since ceased to be a

thing of beauty. More wondrously beautiful than ever she would have appeared, however, had she been planet-bound on a kindly mission; for beauty, too, is relative.

The moon was now a monstrous brazen ball, dimly incardined, whose bulk blotted out so much of the sky that an almost ecliptic darkness, shot through with elderich colors, veiled the world even at meridian. And at night there seemed to be nothing but moon—and each night the moon waxed larger, more malevolent. Another weird effect was the frequency of eclipses on both the earth and moon, caused by the nearness of the two bodies.

The satellite had lost all likeness to the golden disk that once adorned the canopy. The change was as startling as complete. Its "human face" had long since disappeared, and in its stead loomed a terrible topography of gaunt mountains, yawning chasms and pock-marked plains, all plainly discernible without the aid of the telescope. The craters of Copernicus, Clavius and Tycho were especially conspicuous, and from the latter ring the strange white rays stretched uniformly in every direction like streamers of marble expertly designed. The long swath of the Alpine Valley was another prominent feature, while the Apennines and the Carpathian Mountains were so distinct that their jagged peaks could be seen protruding in serrate outline from the face of the satellite, which now appeared slightly convex.

As its orbit narrowed, the moon's librations had become more pronounced and its north and south caps were inclined in turn more and more toward the earth. Time on the satellite also had been disrupted, as it were, its periods of day and night having decreased. It had decreased its distance from the earth by approximately 160,000 miles since the beginning of its earthward jaunt, and the corresponding shrinkage of its orbit had reduced its "fortnights" of light and darkness to less than five days each.

Poets had always been at odds as to the color of the moon, some singing its silvery light and others its golden luster. But now the orb was neither argentine nor aureate. Its general color was that of burnished brass as seen under a red light. Its radiance was dimming rapidly, and it was strange to note that the black shadows of its mountains were becoming less distinct.

The change was even more remarkable as seen through the observatory telescopes. Every feature was brought within touching distance, it seemed, by the giant lenses. Astronomers now saw the wrinkled countenance of the moon almost as plainly as if they were on its very surface, and its color, under the glasses, was dull gray.

The proximity of the satellite had brought much new knowledge of its physical characteristics. Its mountains were shown to be more complex than had been thought, and science now was certain that the Alpine Valley was the result of the contact of some wandering celestial body. Its craters appeared to be the remains or bases of gigantic bubbles raised by volcanic gasses when the globe was molten.

There was no sign of life on the sphere, but evidence that it once had been peopled was indisputable. The discovery that received most attention was that a Gargantuan gargoyle figure was carved on the side of Mount Hadley near the strange markings which Professor Burke had discovered. Its features were too indistinct to provide a clear picture. As for the hieroglyphics, science now was certain that they contained mathematical calculations.

The bolometers showed that the moon's temperature was not nearly so low as had been reckoned, and that its surface was reflecting an appreciable amount of the sun's heat—about one 400,000th part. Whether this fact was occasioned by the globe's nearness to the earth was a matter of conjecture. During the moon's Stygian night, however, the temperature fell to nearly one hun-

dred and fifty degrees below zero, but this was not so cold as science had estimated.

Professors Sherard and Burke, in their overheated observatory, were spending nearly every available minute studying the satellite, and Mildred Reamer was fairly enrapt. The three pondered long over the hieroglyphics on Mount Hadley seeking a deciphering clue which, Ernest believed, lay in the mathematical arrangements.

"I would like to know their significance, even at this late day in the world's life," he told Mildred one night. "I believe they are records left by a dying race. And that weird figure up there must be that of a lunar god. I wonder why I couldn't see it before the Great Change occurred. It must be that its outlines are not as conspicuous as those of the hieroglyphics. But I could swear now that it has two great glittering eyes. It is strange, though, that no other signs of lunar civilization can be detected. The Moonman must have lived in houses of some sort and built temples to their deities. It seems that such structures should still be in a fair state of preservation, due to the absence of air."

"Well, if such ruins exist, they must be on the other side of the moon," Mildred said as she took her eyes from the reflector. "And of course that's not probable, as the temperature on the other side must be inconceivably low. The other side of the moon! How I should like to explore it! And something tells me that I shall, some day. The moon has always called to me, and now, when it is so close that it seems I could reach up and touch it, I am tempted to stretch out my hands and cry for it, as they tell me I did when I was a baby. It seems to be drawing me toward it even as it is pulling the tides. I wonder why."

"Because you are still my Moon Girl," Ernest laughed. And then, tenderly: "Your wish may be fulfilled, after all. Let me tell you a secret. I am planning to set sail for the moon when life on this globe is no longer possible, and I think the voyage can be made. Of course you shall go with me—you and Professor Burke."

Mildred looked at him with the open eyes of wonder. Joyous excitement and anticipation shown in them when she found voice:

"Wonderful! Do you really mean it, Ernest? Tell me how you intend to make the trip."

"Look into the reflector again," he answered. "Now, study the shadows of the Apennines closely and tell me what you see."

"Their edges are no longer hard and black," she said after a minute's observation. "They are much less distinct than they were a week ago. What does it mean?"

"It means," Ernest replied slowly, "that there is air on the moon—the moon is breathing at last."

"And how do you account for it?"

"We have already noticed that our atmosphere is attenuating. The very air is gasping for breath. In my opinion, there is but one answer: *it is being drawn to the moon!*"

CHAPTER IX.

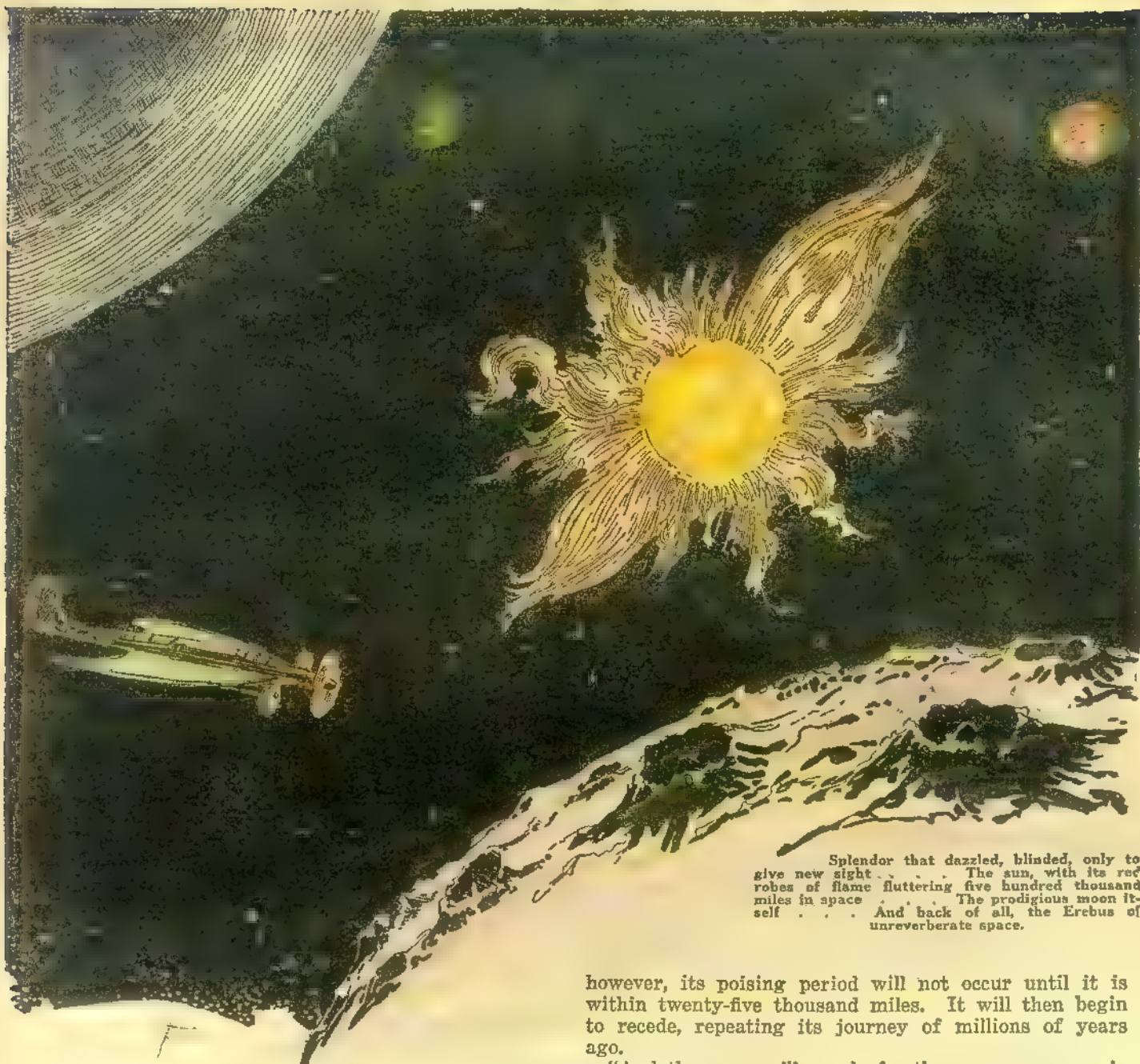
"Let Us Go"

THREE days later Professor Sherard made an even more astounding discovery.

The moon was slowing down!

Trigonometrical calculations showed that the sinister satellite was now approaching the earth at a rate of 4,447 miles in twenty-four hours—nearly three hundred less than its speed of a week before.

Ernest Sherard immediately flashed this intelligence to the remaining observatories and the radio stations of the cliff people. The discovery was seconded at once by other astronomers, including Professor Josephus Sayre of Yerkes. "I congratulate you," Professor Sayre's voice came through the air. "You have made every important discovery since Burke discovered the Great



Splendor that dazzled, blinded, only to give new sight . . . The sun, with its robes of flame fluttering five hundred thousand miles in space . . . The prodigious moon itself . . . And back of all, the Erebus of unreverberate space.

Change itself. But I am on the trail of something big myself. What's the matter with the shadows on the moon?"

The next day Professor Sherard broadcast his last words to the world. It was the message of the last hope, a call for migration to the moon.

"Let every atoliner and atoplane be made ready immediately and all of the open machines hulled in to withstand the cold of space," he urged. "The moon offers the only refuge if any of earth's inhabitants are to survive."

"The moon is only sixty-six thousand miles way," he continued. "Within a normal week it will be not less than fifty thousand, despite its retarded progress. Then its tides will leap higher than our loftiest peaks, many of which will be destroyed by earthquake or undermined by the flood."

"During the past two normal weeks the earth has lost approximately one-eighth of its atmosphere. Unaccountably, the air is being drawn to the moon. Within two more weeks the satellite should have enough air to support human life."

"The moon has slowed down about three hundred miles a day. Its speed will diminish steadily until it comes to a full stop, poised in space. In all probability,

however, its poising period will not occur until it is within twenty-five thousand miles. It will then begin to recede, repeating its journey of millions of years ago.

"And the moon will recede for the same reason as in that remote time. The tides will again have their revenge."

"The terrific force of the tides, lashed from their beds by the moon itself, is counteracting the pull of the earth's atomic magnetism. And there is reason to believe that the magnetism itself is vanishing—probably being carried into space with the earth's atmosphere, though it may be that this agent, which caused the Great Change, is being naturally dissipated. Recent findings indicate that the magnetism is less potent on water than on land. If this is true, it is likely that it will entirely disappear after all the earth is under the seas."

"When the moon has attained a proximity of about twenty-five thousand miles, another glacial age will have truly come upon the earth. Though our globe may become a ball of ice like the distant planets Neptune and Uranus, it is possible that the fury of the tides will prevent the waters congealing as a whole. However, there will be icebergs rivaling Mount Everest in size. Moreover, the sorely perplexed planet will be all but split asunder by centrifugal force which is already manifesting itself in cataclysmic earthquakes. But the world will survive because of its density. Were it a molten mass as in the days when it gave birth to the moon, it

is likely that it would provide its offspring a sister satellite.

"Whether the moon will recede as fast as it approached the earth is a matter of conjecture. Science popularly holds that the sphere left the earth very hesitantly, and that it took the tides countless millions of years to drive it the distance it had attained prior to the Great Change. But there is another theory which has been gaining ground, and upon the truth of which depends the possibility of any of earth's inhabitants returning in event they reach the moon. This is the Bartonian theory, advanced two decades ago. It holds that the moon, when it first left the earth, hurried away at a rate of several thousand miles a day, its speed gradually diminishing as the tidal reaction lessened until, when it had gone about 150,000 miles, its own gravitation almost counterbalanced the recalcitrant tides, and that it then all but paused, its further recession being a matter of millions of years. Barton also believed that the moon then had a good atmosphere, losing it by imperceptible degrees as it receded.

"I have never been an exponent of this theory, but let us hope it is true, after all. With the moon 150,000 miles away, life on the earth would be possible, and perhaps the earth people who succeeded in reaching the satellite could then return. But if the accepted version of the moon's history is correct, return would be impossible for the reason that the earth would continue its breakneck rotation and be hidden under a gelid sea for millions of years.

"There is every reason to believe that the moon will soon be habitable. The presence of air has been established beyond doubt, and more of our atmosphere will accrue to it as it advances. Its climate is becoming warmer each day as a result of its atmosphere retaining more and more of the sun's heat. Immense variations of temperature are to be expected, however, due to its long periods of light and darkness, but the extremes will not be so pronounced as formerly, as its days and nights have shortened in keeping with the narrowing of its orbit.

"I am confident that our atoplanes will have little difficulty in reaching the moon, but they will not be able to attain anything like their earthly speed, due to the thinness of the intervening air. It would be foolhardy, of course, to attempt the flight in other than hulled planes, and these machines must be supplied with an abundance of atohat. We cannot hope to find food on the moon, and the absence of water must be anticipated, though it is very probable that the satellite will have clouds and rain when its atmosphere becomes denser. Also, a supply of oxygen should be provided for an emergency, and it would be well for each ship to carry a small radio set.

"Let each plane store as much condensed food and as much water as possible, and each passenger provided the heaviest clothing available. It might also be well to carry along the seeds of some of our hardiest food plants.

"The moon voyage offers the only hope, slight though it is, and should be attempted as early as possible. It is not certain, of course, that a single Earthian is destined to land on the satellite and that, even though the trip is made, all will not perish up there. But it were better to die in a last desperate attempt than to helplessly await extinction on this planet.

"We will defy the Great Change at its worst. Let us go."

CHAPTER XII Man's Last Stand

THE radio carried Professor Sherard's words to less than seventy-five thousand people, though it flashed to nearly every ear on the globe. Of Terra's inhabitants, all had perished with the exception of the

people on the peaks and a handful in the observatories.

Of the hundreds of thousands of hapless souls who had been stranded on the lower mountains after lingering too long on the plains, not a trace remained. Even the city of Denver was no more.

And merciful were the tides that swept the last of them away—more merciful than the pitiless cold that killed slowly and terribly, more compassionate than the dumb terror that blotted out their minds, more exorable than the heartless hunger that caused them, in the last days of their horrible travail, to kill and devour their own kind.

Bereft of the last trace of sanity and soul, rendered atavistic below the level of the abysmal brute, these veriest victims of the Great Change had all but vanished ere the waters gulped them down. By the tens of thousands they had been felled by cold and hunger. And it was in the last days that man, always a carnivore, had reverted to cannibalism—but man was less than man in that dark time. Creatures that crawl around on all fours and jabber and yowl are not human; neither does man rend with tooth and claw and see through red-green eyes.

And at the close, when the fiendish, fulsome moon was almost upon them and the diabolic tides lashed at them from below, the remnant of these penultimate survivors were as wolves gone mad. Quadrupedal and truly lupine they were, howling their hellish ululations at the heavens until the merciful seas climbed up and drowned their lamentations.

Many of the more fortunate cliff-dwellers had witnessed, through their telescopes, the frightful transition from man to beast enacted on the sea-encircled hills below, but the death-cold that kept them in their caverns toward the last mercifully prevented their viewing the foul finale. The walls of the human ghouls had, however, ascended to their habitations above the raving of the tides and winds, splitting their ears like blasphemies from the Pit itself.

Hundreds of the peak people themselves had succumbed to the intense cold which, entering their retreats through the ventilation openings, defied their atohat. It had been necessary to enlarge the ice-cluttered entrances as the air rarefied. And then, when numbness chained them down, the ice had all but sealed them in their cells. The majority had survived, however, their number being about sixty-five thousand. The other ten thousand survivors were astronomers and co-scientists who had successfully combated with an abundance of atohat the cold that stormed their observatories, and refugees who had been given asylum there in the early days of the Great Change.

The cliff folk, on receipt of Professor Sherard's last message, lost no time in preparing for the lunar flight. Most of their atoplanes and their few giant atoliners had been kept in readiness in their mountain tunnels, but most of the smaller machines had to be hulled and all had to be equipped with powerful atohating apparatus.

These arrangements completed, the problem of storing every available inch of tonnage with condensed food, warm clothing, blankets and the like was taken up. The food of some of the refugees had run low, and the manner in which the more fortunate divided their rations and other worldly goods with the needy was indeed an eloquent commentary on the spirit of universal brotherhood that was dawning when the Great Change came.

And men found room in many a nook and corner of their moonbound cargoes to cache the precious trinkets of femininity, and to heed the pleading voice of childhood: "Daddy, please put my dolly in there."

But the supreme test did not come until the planes were ready for the hop-off.

What with the refugees who had made their way to the peaks without the aid of atoplanes, and the necessity

of packing the machines with indispensables, there were not enough planes to accommodate all the survivors, despite the depletion of their ranks.

It was then that man was man, completely severing the ties that bound him to the Silurian slime and proving his kinship to the stars.

It was then that young and old, weak and strong, and all whose passing would be a loss only to themselves, volunteered to stay behind and laugh at death, that husband and wife, brother and sister and all of kindred ties might live another day.

And the sacrifice was made without hope of reward—was made in the rugged Rockies, the epic Alps, the defiant Himalayas, the majestic Andes, and on every other crest of the world where man had found temporary sanctuary.

Then came the wait for the hour they could dare risk the airpath between the earth and moon. And unless the hour was soon their preparations would be in vain, for monstrous seas already were churning high around the peaks and icebergs almost as vast as the mountains themselves were wallowing in the deeps. Earthquakes were increasing in intensity and frequency until the great hills groaned in a dolorous accompaniment to Terra's torturous whirl.

And the flotsam and jetsam that rode that great deluge was the wreckage of a world, the debris of a civilization whose proud homes and temples had crashed like eggshells when the seas first smashed.

CHAPTER XIII Goodbye, World

"LET'S be the first to attempt the journey," Mildred Reamer had suggested to Ernest Sherard immediately he had broadcast his final message. "We'll call your plane *The Pioneer*. 'The First Man and Maid on the Moon'—wouldn't that be romantic!"

"Yes," Ernest had agreed, "but wouldn't 'The Last Man and Maid on Earth' be just as thrilling? However, I had decided we shall be the first, if possible. I shall tell Professor Burke of our plans."

Earth's atmosphere thinned steadily, the shadows on the moon became less and less distinct, and at last Ernest decided that the airpath was strong enough. Came the hour they were ready to depart. Their atoplane, perched on a landing under the observatory dome, awaited only the starting of the motors and the opening of the electrically operated doors of the dome.

No fear gripped the hearts of the trio who were about to embark on the most hazardous adventure ever undertaken. Ernest Sherard, though strangely preoccupied, was as calm as though he were only preparing to pilot the plane to Los Angeles or Seattle as in the old days. Mildred Reamer was enthusiastic, almost impatient. Professor Burke seemed utterly indifferent, except as to the question of whether the plane would have comfortable sleeping quarters. An undercurrent of emotion swayed Ernest and Mildred, it was true, but they would have been more or less than human had they failed to react in some degree to the seriousness of the occasion, the most momentous of their lives. They were preparing to dare the very heavens, to take the chance of chances. Born of the planet Earth, they were as truly a part of it as the hills and the seas, and their love for it was stronger than they had realized. Somewhere in their inner minds throbbed the thought that they were committing a sacrilege in not resigning themselves to the common fate. Reminiscent they were in their last hour on the globe, but the thought of the perils they were about to face exhilarated rather than depressed them. The Unknown lured rather than repelled. They were unafraid.

Such sentiment stirred Ernest as he stood at the ob-

servatory window and looked down at the warring waters and the bobbing icebergs, and then up at the turgid moon.

"We are like emigrants about to embark for a far and strange land, except that the emigrant is reasonably certain he can return to his native shore some day," he said to Mildred. "His own country always seems fairest to him in the parting hour, and he becomes conscious of a desire to remain, even though remaining means oppression. To stay on this planet another week would mean certain death, and yet I am loath to go—not because I'm afraid, but because the planet's hold on me seems strongest in its darkest hour. But go we must, and I'm glad that the next hour will see the journey started."

"And I, too, would like to remain were there the slightest chance of our surviving," Mildred mused. "The earth is more beautiful to me now than ever before. Nature has always made her strongest appeal to me when in her most violent moods. I have always loved a storm at sea. And now, when the whole earth is a raging ocean, its terrible grandeur seems to bid me stay and become a part of the eerie madness. But the call of the moon is stronger. My dream is about to come true, and I am eager to begin the great adventure. I'm sure we shall succeed. How long will it take us to get there?"

"Probably not more than seventy hours," Ernest informed her. "The moon is now about fifty-eight thousand miles away. The maximum speed of our plane is two thousand miles an hour, but due to the thinness of the intervening air it will hardly be able to do better than eight hundred miles. Professor Burke and I shall have to swap turns as pilot, so each of us can get some sleep, for when the moon's attraction becomes greater than the earth's, our plane will begin to descend instead of climb, and a steady hand must be at the wheel to glide it to the moon. By starting now, I believe we will reach the sphere during its day period, and that would be a great advantage in making a successful landing."

"And shall we have to remain cooped in the plane during the long lunar nights?" Mildred asked.

"Yes, for a little while at least," Ernest answered. "It is likely that within a few days the moon will have enough atmosphere to retain a goodly part of the sun's heat during its nights, but at first we'll have to stay in our ship with our atohat at maximum and our ventilation at minimum. It is probable we shall have to resort to our oxygen tanks for the first two or three days."

"Those long lunar nights will fit in to perfection," put in Professor Burke, who had just entered the room. "Maybe I'll be able to make up for some of the sleep I've been missing for several months. I'm almost sorry the moon's nights aren't as long as they used to be."

"Are you ready for the hop-off, Professor?" Ernest queried.

"Well, I suppose one time is just as good as another—and better," he returned gloomily. "The moon can be no worse than this old world, and I shall shed no maudlin tears on leaving. Life here is but moonshine, anyway, and the moon can have no moonshine. I was beginning to hope, however, that you would forget and leave me behind, and that, if the blamed old tail-light you call the moon does not stop, it would crash into the earth with such a bang that it would sink all the way to hell, where it belongs."

"What's in that package under your arm, Professor—your copy of Schopenhauer?" Mildred asked, hiding a smile.

"Yes—some books and a goodly supply of tobacco and other seeds," he replied between puffs on his inevitable pipe. "I'll wager I'll be the first Earthian with foresight in the premises, and before long they'll be coming to me on their knees to get the weed—that is, if we really

reach the moon, and there's rain on it, and tobacco will grow up there—and if I don't misplace the darned seed. Remind me of it when we reach the moon, will you?"

"Are you sure you've put everything we need in the plane?" Mildred asked, turning to Ernest.

"Except one of the most important things of all—a telescope. I think we can make room for the small glass I used when my observatory was in your mother's attic—the one you used to call the 'big gun.' I'll get it now."

Ten minutes later they were ready to go. The big doors of the observatory were widely ajar, letting in a rush of deadly air. Ernest started the puissant motors. They were off.

"Goodbye, dear world!" cried Mildred.

"Farewell, mean macrocosm!" grunted Professor Burke.

CHAPTER XIV

The Aerial Argosy

ON—on—on to meet the moon.

It was early morning when Ernest Sherard and his companions left Earth—sunrise, with darkness less than six hours off.

Mildred and Professor Burke, seated in the rear of the atoplane, were afforded a wonderful view of the world they were leaving. Ernest, piloting, could see none of it.

Looking through the small observation window, Mildred and her quaint companion saw the earth apparently retreating from their ship. This sensation of standing still while ascending was not new to them, however.

At a distance of twenty miles the illusion of the planet's concavity was perfect. The globe seemed more like a saucer than a bowl—an immeasurable saucer that held a swirling mass, for the movement of the waters was still discernable. Here and there loomed the white tops of mountains and icebergs, the latter distinguishable by their motion and brilliancy. Flashing the primal colors like Titanic, many-faceted diamonds, their radiance leaped high into the heavens like rainbows straightened on the knees of a god, and between the shifting, dazzling shafts could be seen, far below, the dark green background of the rolling seas. Mildred was enrapt, and through the speaking tube shouted a partial description to Ernest. Professor Burke gave the spectacle little notice. "I thought it would look like that," was his callous remark.

With one hundred miles behind them, the earth seemed flat and darker. The play of the sunlight on the icebergs was only dimly visible, but scarcely less beautiful in its subdued witchery of commingled tints.

It was at this point of the voyage that Ernest Sherard gave a shout of exultation. "I was right!" he cried. "We are a hundred miles from Earth and the air is as dense as when we started. The moon is ours!"

Professor Burke did not hear Ernest's rejoicing. The discoverer of the Great Change was fast asleep.

Ernest's calculation as to the retarded speed of the plane proved nearly correct. With the motors going full speed, the speedometer showed almost eight hundred miles an hour.

Mildred watched the vanishing, dwindling planet as long as there was a ray of light. At a distance of twenty-five hundred miles, Terra was seen in its natural convexity, and loomed as a huge expanse of opal and sapphire. And half an hour later, in the red glory of the sunset, it was like a jewel in the ring of Cosmos, an indescribably beautiful fusion of topaz and bloodstone.

Then came the purple night and the planet Earth was swathed in darkness save for the faintly reflected light of the moon which revealed it as a disk of shimmering green and tarnished gold whose colossal bulk, like a dimly phosphorescent sea suspended in space, all but filled the picture below.

While Mildred was drinking in the beauty of the scene, Ernest called to her.

"Move forward and look at the stars," he said. "You can't see them well back there."

Looking over his shoulder, through the glass shield, the girl beheld a panorama of celestial splendor that entranced her, held her spellbound in silent ecstasy. Directly before her lay the great face of the burnished moon, its pock-marked countenance more vivid than she had ever seen it with unaided vision. And on either side, and above and below, stretched a wilderness of dazzling points of light against a Stygian background.

"The stars!" she cried at last. "I had no idea they would be so brilliant. I thought the air which surrounds us would dim them, as on Earth."

"And so did I until a little while ago," Ernest said. "Can't you guess what their radiance signifies?"

"I don't believe I can," she replied after a minute's pondering. "Please tell me."

"It means that we are only a short distance from the ether of space—that the air path is attenuated toward the center, as if it were traveling through a tapering funnel as big as the earth at one end and as the moon at the other. The narrowest part will be much nearer the moon than the earth, of course, because the moon is the smaller body. Whether this means that the air is denser or thinner as the tapering proceeds remains to be seen, but I believe it will be thicker and that our speed will increase until we have passed the 'neck.' We are now making eight hundred miles an hour."

"And what if we should jut out of the unseen path as it contracts?" Mildred asked anxiously.

"It would be the end of our adventure. Our ship might fall back into the air, but there would be little time to right it, and it would fall back to Earth like a plummet. I'm afraid that that will be the fate of many who come after us—those who will not know that the brilliance of the stars portends danger ahead. That is why I am pointing *The Pioneer* directly at the center of the moon.

"When is Professor Burke to take the wheel?"

"As soon as he wakes. I want to be in charge when we reach the danger zone, and I must try to get some sleep in the meantime. He's still asleep, I suppose."

"He's snoring. He has missed nearly all of the beauty—said he knew there would be billboards to mar the 'scenery' if he cared to look."

They resumed their star-gazing, their moon-musing.

"Look at Mars!" Mildred cried as she espied the red planet far out in space. "It looks like a small moon itself!"

"Yes, and the planets will appear much larger as we near the walls of ether. It will be a spectacle to thrill even Professor Burke—if he wakes in time."

"The Professor is an enigma even to himself, I think," Mildred remarked. "How can one sleep in a time like this? I was never so awake, so alive. I feel that I shall not be able to sleep until the moon is ours. I shall stay awake until the next darkness, at least."

"There won't be so much darkness after a while," Ernest reminded. "The night that surrounds us now is caused by the shadow of the earth, and we will soon be so far out in space that the shadow will no longer cross our path except when the planet is directly between us and the sun."

"And we will then see the shadow as a lunar eclipse!" Mildred rejoiced. "Our voyage is so wonderful that I'm almost sorry it must end. Look at Orion out there! It seems I can almost count the stars in its configuration."

They journeyed on, the hum of the motors becoming louder each hour, telling them that the air was becoming stronger. And to Mildred, the song of the motors seemed to be:

"We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea."

CHAPTER XV

Journey's End

THE journey was more than half over. The moon was only twenty-five thousand miles away. Professor Burke had roused from his slumbers long enough to act as pilot for eight hours, and had then resumed his nap. Mildred had retired to her cabin for her first sleep since leaving Earth. Ernest Sherard, certain that they were nearing the point of greatest danger, was pointing *The Pioneer* directly at the small crater of Reaumur, a central cavity on the satellite's pitted face. He was to call Mildred when they neared the narrowest part of the unseen road, the boundaries of which would be only a few miles away, so that she might see the stars and planets at their brightest, and the glory of the sun's corona.

Professor Burke had failed to show any mark of feeling while viewing the stars from the cockpit, but had he been lifted to the seventh heaven of ecstasy, he would not have admitted it. He regarded a display of the emotions—the militant urge excepted—as an advertisement of temperamental instability, just as he considered it a sign of mental weakness to fully agree with anyone. He conceded, however, that the panorama was of transcendent beauty, but contended that he couldn't see anything wonderful about it. "We expected it to look like that, you know," he told Mildred. "We know the cause, and it would be wonderful only if the cause failed to produce the effect."

When Ernest resumed command the plane was making a thousand miles an hour. Within three hours the indicator was pushing fourteen hundred. It was then Ernest called to Mildred.

"We are nearing the crucial stage," he informed. "The air is nearly as dense as it used to be on Earth, and I believe it will be even denser at the narrowest point, in which event our ship will exceed any speed it has ever attained."

"How far are we from the moon?"

"Hardly more than twenty-four thousand miles. Twenty-four more hours should see our journey ended, as I believe we will average about a thousand miles an hour the rest of the way. We will probably average twenty-five hundred when we are in the 'neck' of the air, and more than a thousand for several more hours. And then, when the air is again so rarefied that our speed is materially diminished, we will probably have reached a point where the moon's attraction is greater than the earth's. This will necessitate *retarding* our plane—like applying the brakes of an automobile in going down hill. We will then have to spiral down to the moon."

"Why, that means we must spiral for thousands of miles, does it not?"

"Yes, eight or nine thousand, I should say. I calculate we will be that close to the moon when the gravitational change occurs. Luna, we must remember, also has been advancing to meet us, though her speed has been reduced greatly since we left Earth. The two spheres then were separated by approximately fifty-eight thousand miles. We have come not more than twenty-nine thousand, but the moon, despite its slowing down, has advanced about five thousand during that time. This brings us within twenty-four thousand miles, and the next hour or so should find us entering the belt of thickest air."

"I think we must be entering it now," Mildred said. "The planets are almost as bright as small suns, and I'm certain I can see a faint glow of the solar corona. I am going back to look at the earth again, and I'll wake

Professor Burke so we may see the flaming sun together. I suppose he'll growl at being roused, but I've heard him say many times that he would like to be where he could see the corona without waiting for an eclipse. I have no hope that the spectacle will come up to his expectations, however. He's certain to find something wrong with it."

It was neither night nor day twenty-four thousand miles out in space. A ghostly twilight unlike any the Earthians had ever seen filled the airpath—a twilight that hinted of green. Mildred had first noticed the strange dusk several thousand miles back and had called Ernest's attention to it, and he had told her that she would probably discover the cause the next time she looked through the rear observation window.

One glance through the glass solved the mystery for Mildred. "Eureka!" she exclaimed, her voice exulting through the speaking tube. "It's the earthlight, Ernest. Our world is now a great ball of shimmering green. Its radiance seems phosphorescent. All of the globe is visible, but I think I see the shadow of night beginning to encroach on one side of it—the eastern side, I was about to say, but I've lost all sense of direction up here. If the earth were not covered with ice and water I'm sure I could see the continents in bas-relief. I wish you could see it, Ernest. It is more beautiful than I ever dreamed it could be."

"Well, that confirms the popular scientific theory as to the planetary color of Terra," Ernest responded. "Personally, however, I believed its luminosity, viewed from afar, could have been blue as well as green. Professor Burke always insisted Earth was a yellow planet. I wonder what he'll say about it now."

"He has already said it," Mildred laughed. "I found him earth-gazing when I came to wake him, and his only remark was that he had just made the astounding discovery that the earth, not the moon, was made of green cheese."

"Yes, and I still contend it's yellow, if viewed from a sufficient distance," Burke's voice triumphed behind them. "Disprove that if you can. And I also claim that pretty moon of yours is likely to turn on its axis before long, though I don't think Ernest has mentioned that phase of the situation."

Mildred continued to watch the globe until the black fringe had climbed over its edge and blotted out a fourth of it. It was then that she saw for the first time, a gibbous Earth. So rapidly was the planet revolving she could see the movement of the shadow across its face. She told Ernest of this, and the young lunarian's guess was that the world was revolving in slightly less than five hours.

"And it's certain the waves have conquered everything but the highest peaks," he added. "I wonder if there is a spark of life left. The temperature must be almost as low as up here. Let us hope that every atoplane has already left the planet. Some of them may be only a few thousand miles behind us."

"How cold is it outside?" Mildred asked.

"About ninety below zero. The propeller blades are glazed with two inches of ice. It was a hundred below a few minutes ago, and the rise is proof that the air is getting much denser. Our ship is now making the unprecedented speed of twenty-three hundred miles an hour, and I guess this means we are near the outer nothingness. Come and look at the sun now, Mildred, and bring the Professor with you."

The next hour was, to them, the climax of eternity itself, the one hour into which was crowded all the beauty and splendor spun of creation's warp and woof . . . The pristine glory of the universe resplendent in an infinitude of ether . . . Beauty inconceivable, ineffable . . . Beauty so exquisite that it sang of pain . . . Beauty that subdued, demanding silence . . . Celestial splendor

not meant for mortal eyes . . . Splendor that dazzled, blinded, only to give new sight . . . The sun with its red robes of flame fluttering five hundred thousand miles in space . . . The swing of Pleiades . . . Orion's nebulous lustre . . . Saturn, ringed and many-mooned . . . Blue Venus, fairest daughter of the sun . . . Red Mars, big as a bloody moon . . . The prodigious moon itself . . . And back of all, the Erebus of unreverberate space.

After many minutes, Ernest's voice broke the pregnant silence.

"It's a pity we won't be able to see this sublimity from the moon," he said. "It's newly acquired atmosphere will dim the stars and hide the corona. We may be seeing their real glory for the last time, for the air path is already widening. And by the way—we'd better prepare for the gravitational change. We'll feel as light as birds when we come under the moon's influence."

Two hours later they were beyond the narrow pale, the gorgeous extravaganza of the heavens fading behind them. Their aerial argosy's speed had diminished to seventeen hundred miles an hour. Before them, less than twenty thousand miles, lay the mystic mountains of the moon.

It was full daylight on Luna, but the brightness was steadily giving way to a monochrome of gray. This seeming paradox, Ernest explained, was due to the moon's borrowed brilliance disappearing as its natural dullness hove into view.

The mountains were only faintly discernible in the gray blur, and the craters had vanished entirely. Ernest foresaw little danger on this score, however, as the airpath was now several hundred miles wide, permitting greater latitude in guiding the plane. The crater of Reaumur and other moonmarks would reappear, he knew, when near enough to be distinguished without the aid of the lost light.

As they were studying the lunar dimness, another transition occurred. A sable circle began to edge its way over the great ashen ball, turning it into a globe of ebony. It was the shadow of Terra. They had seen many eclipses since the Great Change, but none so spectacular, so bizarre as this. They watched it until the moon was entirely darkened, and then until the blackness moved on into space, leaving Luna to her weird, wan sombreness.

Came the hour when the pull of the moon was stronger than that of the earth. The physical effects of the change were not so marked as they had anticipated. They first became aware that they were descending instead of climbing when they were about nine thousand miles from their destination and the earth was some forty-five thousand miles above them. In a little while *The Pioneer* was descending in vast, but ever-narrowing circles.

And then, with only three thousand miles to go, they could see the mountain ranges in bold relief, while the craters appeared as shell-holes on some ancient battlefield of Earth. The moon was now the color of gray weathered sandstone.

Down they went until the darkest parts of the satellite assumed the color of slate. The gliding process was becoming complicated because of the moon's weak tug, and Ernest had to keep the motors in operation most of the time. Down, until they were below the level of the higher peaks. Down, until the crevices and craters yawned in their very faces.

Amid a cloud of lunar dust, they landed on a level stretch about a mile from Reaumur.

CHAPTER XVI

The Pit of Reaumur

THEIR epochal journey ended, there remained the possibility that it had been made in vain.

The Pioneer's altimeter told them that the moon's

atmosphere was as dense as that which they had left on Earth, and the thermometer revealed that the temperature was twenty degrees above zero, but whether or not the long lunar nights would bring the cold of death was a question that the darkness only could answer.

Accomplishers of the most perilous feat mortals ever attempted, they felt the surge of fear now that the voyage was over—the fear of the unknown that was the heritage of life itself. The stretch of moonland around them, grotesque and uninviting, seemed to whisper mysteries dark as the Apennines that loomed on the far horizon. Reason told them there was nothing to fear, but imagination hinted of forces subtle and sinister. They found it difficult to believe they were actually on the moon. The Great Change, the flight through space and the very moon itself now seemed a fantastic dream.

Not a word was uttered for several minutes. Professor Burke's piping voice was the first to pierce the lunar silence.

"Let's get out of here," he suggested. "I feel as though I had been living in one of those ancient New York apartment houses. I want to see what is inside that small crater over there."

"And who shall be the first Earthian to set foot on the moon?" Ernest queried. "If the Professor doesn't care, I move that Mildred be given that honor."

"Sure," Burke acquiesced. "I'd probably decline the distinction even if Mildred were not here, for it strikes me that one time to turn the trick is just as good as another, if not better, in view of the fact that the world will never know of it."

"But that's not fair," Mildred objected. "Ernest has given nearly his whole life to lunar study and it was his knowledge and initiative that brought us here. I insist that he have the honor."

As a compromise, she and Ernest stepped from the plane together, touching the soil simultaneously.

"The First Man and Maid on the Moon!" Mildred jubilated. "My dream has come true at last!"

"At last," Ernest echoed. "It was my dream, too, you know."

"And I wonder if we aren't dreaming still," Mildred marvelled. "I feel almost ethereal since I stepped from the plane. It seems I could really fly if I tried. Of course I know why, and it means we must learn to walk anew. We are no more than moon babies now."

"Yes," Ernest said, "we must learn all over. The moon's gravity is only one-sixth that of the earth, and we'll be almost helpless at first. We didn't feel the change so much before we landed, because the ship was in motion. 'Moon babies' is right. Suppose we start now. Hold my hand and we'll venture a short step—just a few inches. Here we go!"

Despite their caution, their first stride carried them two yards and they would have fallen head-first but for the feebleness of the moon's pull which enabled them to regain their equilibrium.

Their next attempt proved more successful, though it was more a leap than a step. Their third effort was even more encouraging and they were certain they could soon adjust their locomotion to lunar requirements.

"Wait, there, I'll show you how to ambulate on this deceptive surface!"

Professor Burke had stepped from the plane. They turned to see him crouched for a leap.

"Say, what are you going to do?" Ernest called.

"I'm going to jump to that small crater over there. That's the way to travel here. A healthy jump will carry me at least seven yards."

"Look out!"

The warning came too late. The pudgy professor was already in the air. His leap carried him fully ten feet high and he turned a complete somersault in mid-

air and fell in a heap twenty feet from its starting point, half buried in the powdery soil.

"First mistake I've made this year," he said dryly, getting up and shaking the dust from his clothes. "My reckoning didn't include such an ascension. You must admit, however, that the first half of my jump was a great success."

In a few minutes he had partly mastered the short-step gait his companions were employing and was ambling toward the crater some fifty yards away. The pit was no more than a shell-hole, with walls about four feet high.

Ernest and Mildred awaited his return. They saw him reach the cavity after a hard struggle, peer into it and shake his head negatively.

"Well, what was inside?" Ernest asked upon his return.

"Just as I thought—nothing but the inside, and not much of that."

"That crater is no more than a stump-hole compared with some of the moon's pockmarks," Ernest reminded. "I imagine that Reaumur, over yonder, will prove a more fruitful object of study. It's only a mile, so I suggest we walk over and investigate."

"Why walk?" Professor Burke asked sharply. "The plane would get us there in a jiffy."

"Yes, but I think the walk will do us good. We need some exercise after our long confinement."

"Well, suit yourselves. I'll stay here till you return. I want to examine this soil and see if it will grow tobacco. The stuff looks as if it contains silver."

Ernest smiled. "I think the Professor sadly mistrusts his underpinning," he whispered to Mildred as they began their hike.

But the lunar soil was indeed a substance worthy of scientific study. It was like no soil they had known on Earth. The color of salt and even more finely grained, it seemed to be a mixture of disintegrated rock, pulverized marble and silica. It glittered in the sunlight, and gave under foot like dry snow.

Its latter quality, hinting of quicksand, tended to abet the effect of the moon's puny gravitation, and Ernest and Mildred soon learned that walking was a more complicated matter than their first brief efforts had indicated. They found it necessary to hold hands most of the way, and their tedious journey consumed the better part of an hour.

But the reward was worth the effort. Upon nearing the ramparts of Reaumur, which rose about four hundred feet, they made the first surprising discovery of their lunar exploration.

The mysterious white rays they had seen through the telescope were explained!

Leading into the pit of Reaumur from every direction like spokes into a hub, the rays were nothing less than deep ditches, waterways dug by the Moonmen of long ago. Their purpose was obvious; they had been made to hoard the rainfall of a drying world by carrying it into the natural reservoirs of the craters through small openings bored through the walls. The greater length of the channels was covered with the strange sand, but enough was visible, at the base of Reaumur's ramparts, to tell their history. And when Ernest, using his hands as a shovel, removed some of the sand from the bottom of one of the ditches at a point some distance from the crater, he learned why the trenches around the larger pits had appeared white through the telescope. The lower walls and bottoms were lined with a material that resembled highly polished marble!

The openings in the sides of the crater were too small, and the ramparts too high, to permit exploration of the interior.

"Probably every sizable crater tells the same story—the story of a dying race," Ernest remarked as he and Mildred turned to go. There was a touch of sadness in

his voice. "It must have taken the Moonmen many years—centuries, perhaps—to convert the craters into cisterns. The Martians, science believes, once engaged in a similar work—digging canals."

"But why is it," Mildred asked, "that the channels of the principal craters are white for miles while those of Reaumur are almost hidden by sand?"

"The only supposition is that the craters of Tycho, Copernicus and Kepler, whose rays are most pronounced, are in regions comparatively free of this substance we have called sand. This must be particularly true of Kepler, which is located on one of the dark plains which the early astronomers called seas. I believe we will learn much more when we visit the larger pits where the waterways through the walls may be large enough for us to go through and view the interior. Reaumur is one of the minor craters—not more than ten miles in diameter."

"Which region do you intend to explore first?"

"You should have guessed that—Mount Hadley, of course. It is possible that we can decipher the hieroglyphics and learn more than we could by years of exploration."

Beginning their trek back to the plane, they saw Professor Burke, a pygmy in the distance, walking in a narrow circle and flapping his arms for balance, like a penguin.

"The Professor will probably tell us that he has reached the astounding conclusion that snowshoes would facilitate our peripatetic progress," Ernest predicated.

"And I'll agree with him," Mildred laughed.

But the Professor's greeting contained not a perambulatory word.

"I have discovered that this sand is exactly the color of dirty salt," he said, "and I don't believe it would grow even cactus."

CHAPTER XVII

Mount Hadley

"SHALL we start now, or get some sleep first?" Ernest asked after telling Professor Burke of his plan to visit Mount Hadley. "As for me, I propose some food and then a little slumber."

"And as for me, I refuse to budge until you have slept a while," Mildred declared. "You haven't slept six hours since we left Earth. And I'll admit I'm quite sleepy myself."

"Well, it seems the motion is carried," Professor Burke yawned, "I was hoping we would not be slaves to slumber on the moon, that its hold would be weakened, like its law of gravitation, but it appears that Morpheus is also one of the lunar gods. Put us on the farthest star and we'd be earthbound still. Therefore, let us sleep."

Ernest also yawned. "I guess I am about 'all in,' but me mustn't lose much time in sleep just now. The lunar night will begin in less than twenty hours, and I want to see Mount Hadley first. Seven or eight hours' sleep should put me back in trim."

"And how long will the darkness last?" Mildred queried.

"Without figuring it out, about thirty hours, I should say. That will give us plenty of time to make up for lost slumber."

"And thank goodness there are no alarm clocks on the moon—and no blamed roosters," Professor Burke commented. "I'm not sleepy, though."

After partaking of some concentrated food, they retired to their respective bunks and were soon wrapped in oblivion.

Ernest was the first to wake, some eight hours later. Stentorian snores from the direction of Professor Burke's compartment told him that his somnolent companion was still dormant.

Pushing the button of the wire that led to Mildred's room, Ernest heard her cheery "all right!" ring out with the first tinkle of the tiny bell. A few minutes later she joined him, lilting *Caro Nome*.

"Happy?" Ernest asked.

"As though we were back on Earth attending an opera or watching a storm. I suppose there will be no storms on the moon. Imagine how wonderful it would be to see thunderclouds fighting the peaks of the Apennines!"

"Yes, it would be inspiring. We may not see any storm clouds here, but there will not be an entire absence of thunder so long as Professor Burke persists in sleeping with his mouth open. I must go and wake him now, for Mount Hadley is calling us. No use to ring the bell—guess I'll have to pull him out of bed."

"I've been awake an hour!" the girl heard the Professor remonstrate at Ernest's chiding.

Half an hour later they had breakfasted on condensed food and coffee heated on the plane's atomizers and were ready to take off on their first intralunar flight.

"Well, what do you know about that!" Ernest ejaculated when the big metal bird failed to lift at the first throbs of the motors. "We're stalled!"

"You mean you're stalled," Professor Burke chortled triumphantly. "The propellers are not used to this lunar air. Speed up the motors and we will rise."

"I had thought of that," Ernest laughed, "but it must be the same air we had on Earth, and it seems dense enough. I rather think the trouble lies below—that the plane is wheel-deep in sand. Let's see."

He stopped the motors and climbed out.

"I was right, Professor," he called back a minute later. "The ship is all but resting on its hull. The lunar soil is little more than quicksand."

"Just as I thought," Professor Burke muttered, reaching for his pipe, as Ernest returned to the cockpit.

To the full tug of the powerful motors, *The Pioneer* rose from its tenacious bed. After the helicopter had lifted it about five hundred feet, Ernest turned it round and leveled it at the distant Apennines.

"How far are the mountains?" Mildred asked.

"Not more than five hundred miles. We could make it in a few minutes, but I think I'll travel leisurely so we may study the moon's terrain."

"The moon's terrain! The moon's terrain!" Professor Burke fairly convulsed with laughter. "I always thought terrain was rather peculiar to Terra."

"The moon's topography, or the moonscape, if you prefer," Ernest laughed back, Mildred joining in the mirth.

Vast stretches of the strange gray sand, punctured here and there by small craters, was all they saw for the first three hundred miles. The land then became more rugged, the plain giving way to small hills sprinkled with grotesque boulders.

Ernest suddenly tilted *The Pioneer* upward, carried it to eighteen thousand feet and then swerved it to the left, in the direction of a great circular formation that was coming into view.

"The crater of Eratosthenes, I think," he told his companions. "I'm not certain, but we'll fly over it and see."

The jagged walls of the fantastic ring-plain seemed to be coming to meet them. In one place the ramparts rose more than sixteen thousand feet.

They were soon over the vast enclosure.

"It is Eratosthenes," Ernest said. "It's about forty miles in diameter. See that great mound in the middle of the bowl? That's the massive central complex mountain which, seen from earth, sometimes looked like a crater ring. Eratosthenes is one of the moon's finest ring-planes, but Copernicus, just to the east of the Apennines, is larger. Eratosthenes is at the eastern terminus

of the range, while Mount Hadley is at the northern extremity."

The Apennines became visible before they had crossed the crater. The sullen mass of the great chain seemed interminable. Ernest kept the plane at eighteen thousand feet and turned it in the direction of Mount Hadley.

The Pioneer moved slowly over the weird expanse of lavatic ridges. Some of the peaks rose like needle-points, and between them, far below, yawned deep, distorted canyons and sinuous ravines. So terrible was the grandeur of the Apennines that the Earthians found it hard to realize they were not in a ghostly dream.

At length they were over the northern border of the range and Ernest pointed out a great peak which he took to be Mount Hadley. But no hieroglyphics were visible.

"The writing may be on the other side," he ventured as he nosed the plane downward in ever-widening spirals to the base of the 15,000 foot mountain.

Professor Burke's thick, horn-rimmed spectacles, which he always insisted he did not really need, furnished first discovery.

"Look!" he cried, when they were half down the cliff.

"Look!" His voice rang with alien excitement.

"Where?" his companions exclaimed in breathless unison.

"Down there—behind us!" Vainly he panted and pointed. His companions saw nothing but blank rock.

"Now we've lost them!" Professor Burke wailed. "Can't see them again until the next roundtrip. They're a thousand feet high!"

Ernest made the next spiral in nasty speed.

"There—I see them!" Mildred exclaimed as the other side of the mountain again came into view. "Look, Ernest!"

The Pioneer was about five thousand feet high. Below, beginning about two thousand feet from the base, was Mount Hadley's flat face—a slate-colored wall so nearly smooth and straight that it seemed the work of some deft blade immeasurably Titanic. And on the vast escarpment inlaid with whitish stone, was the handiwork of the Moonmen.

Still farther below, at the very foot of the cliff and between Hadley and the next high mountain, stretched a level expanse several miles wide.

On this plain *The Pioneer* landed.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Thing

"I T can't be done, but I'll do it," was the contradictory declaration of Professor Burke, in the role of hieroglyphist, after he had studied the characters on Mount Hadley for several hours.

Landing about a mile from the base of the mountain, their first act had been to walk to the pictured cliff for a closer scrutiny, only to discover that the gigantic size of the symbols precluded study at close range. And another thing they discovered: the characters, with the exception of the most imposing figure, a Gargantuan something made of a cement-like material, were of the whitest marble, inlaid deeply and dexterously in the slaty wall.

They were now back at the plane, having found it a point of vantage for viewing the enigmatic panorama with the aid of their binoculars.

Compelling as the lure of lost Atlantis, baffling as the quiz of Theban sphinx, fantastic as the wildest hashish dream, was the scene that held their interest.

Two thousand feet the tablet towered; one thousand feet it stretched. A central figure of an uncouth Thing—was it male or female, god or devil? Before it, kneeling votaries almost as weirdly formed; above it, and on

either side, long lines of lunar lore; below it, Titan figures telling mathematic art.

The central figure—the Thing—was fully three hundred feet high despite its sitting posture. Modeled in bold relief, it seemed a nightmare, something turned to stone. Though its features were plainly delineated, there was a suggestion of shapelessness throughout. It might have been an evil genie from Aladdin's mystic lamp, or a shape from the nethermost pit. Its head—if head it might be called—was larger than its body. By far the most conspicuous feature was its eyes—great protruding radiant balls set high on a bulging brow and topped by what seemed to be spreading antennae. The orbs were at least fifteen feet in diameter, were faceted, and sparkled like a thousand diamonds. Its nose was a stubby porcine snout; its mouth an inordinate, many-fanged, flabby-lipped gash reaching almost from ear to ear and twisted in a Gargoyle grin, half smile, half leer. Its ears were huge fantastic appendages extending from the jowl below the level of the nose-tip. The lower part of the head, like the upper, was turgid, giving it the contour of the figure 8, of a plump peanut, rather. There was no neck.

The Thing's body was bulbous and striped, like a monstrous onion. Two massive, triple-jointed arms, resembling in structure the anterior legs of an insect, protruded from each shoulder, the lower pair being folded across its pot belly while the other two, extended in front of the body, clutched a colossal block of stone which was suspended menacingly over a huge bowl held in the lap, the two objects forming a sort of mortar and pestle arrangement. The bowl was gripped between the monstrosity's stump legs, which corresponded in number with its arms and were likewise triple-jointed. But what attracted the Earthians most, next to the fetish's blazing eyes, were its hands and feet which, though scaly, were human in every other respect, even to the nails.

The Thing was naked, sexless.

In striking contrast to the monster's uncouth proportions and terrible aspect, but scarcely less bizarre, were the figures of its worshippers. The kneeling Moonmen, some of whose faces were turned from the god, were half insect, half human. Their heads, prodigious and almost perfectly oval, were balanced on long and absurdly small necks. Their eyes mere specks under beetling brows and, like the idol's, were surmounted by antennae. Their noses were short and flat, with enormous nostrils. Their ears, disproportionately large, might have been huge copies of cocklesheils, and were radially ribbed inside and notched on the rims. Their mouths were quite small and rather puckered, but not uncomely. All told, their faces, while amazingly grotesque, were not forbidding.

The bodies of the Moonmen also were egg-shaped, but more tapering than their heads. The circumference of their chests must have been thrice that of their wasp-like waists, from which suspended short leather-like garments. Of arms and legs there were only two of each but they, like the idol's, were triple-jointed, and exceedingly long and slender ending, like the god's, in hands and feet of human shape. Though formed of cement like the idol, there was a suggestion of fragility, of pulpiness, almost, about the figures. To quote Professor Burke, the Moonmen looked like "abominable insects lugging twin maypops* around."

There were other Moon people, men and women fashioned on the cliff, and several kinds of animals, but nothing to denote the life size of either—and if there had been, the comparisons would have been meaningless to the Earthians. On either side of the idol some distance away, stood groups of erect Moonmen, some of them en-

cased in armor and armed with spears and clubs—the Lunar legions, no doubt. The soldiers also wore helmets strangely like those of Terra's ancient knights, barring the holes through which antennae protruded. Other figures—presumably female—wore umbrella-shaped headgear and carried baskets and urns. A few naked children were represented.

The animals—if animals they were—were even more insect-like than the Lunarians. Though varying in size and structure, the bodies of all were oval and tail-less, their heads mere knobs. Professor Burke said they looked like fat sausages with knots on one end. Some of the beasts were quadrupeds, others hexapods. Among the six-legged were some gigantic things formed like fleas, except that their bodies were not laterally compressed. Some of them were hitched to clumsy two-wheeled chariots and carts. There also were some bloated creatures with udders and teats, some small quadrupeds held in leash like dogs, and several other shapes that could be likened to nothing the Earthians had seen on their globe.

Hundreds of lunar objects also were represented. There were pictures of mountains, craters, caves of houses that resembled adobe structures, and one of an imposing, many-windowed building that must have been a temple. A series of horizontal wavy lines was taken by the Earthians to represent water, and an arch, surmounting perpendicular wavy streaks, looked like a rain picture drawn by a prehistoric artist of the mother planet. And there was the likeness of the mother world itself—two circles in which the outlines of Earth's continents had been carved. The hemispheres were not readily distinguishable, however. The eastern continents were not quite in keeping with those known to the Earthians, the western hemisphere showed that North America was joined to Asia by a narrow neck of land, and between the Americas and Europe, nearer the latter continent and embraced in the circle showing the western half of the globe, lay a vast body of land which the Earthians had never seen, but which they knew to be Atlantis. The outlines of nearly all the continents were slightly different from those with which they were familiar. It was clear that great geologic changes had taken place since the maps were drawn. For instance, the Lunarians had the continent of Asia extending clear to Borneo and including the Philippine Islands—and there was "The Wallace Line"* between Asia and Australia.

Hieroglyphics stretched in every direction, line on line. Some of them were carved above the idol and on both sides of the erect Moonmen, and on the sides of the chariots and carts. Many of the characters were more than a hundred feet high; others, particularly those on the vehicles, relatively small.

The arithmetical arrangements near the base of the mountain were easily comprehensible. Their simplicity seemed striking proof that the Lunarians knew Earth was inhabited and had tried to make their meaning intelligible to the planetarians. First, there was a long straight mark, a dash and then another mark, followed by a symbol for the figure 1. This system continued through the figure 8, each total being accompanied by its symbol, then advanced into octuplication, and later into mathematical characters that the Earthians could not decipher.

The carvings naturally interested Ernest and Mildred more than anything they had seen since reaching the satellite. Ernest now knew why he had been unable to see the great idol from Earth: its cement composition was almost as dark as its slaty background. He believed, however, that he should have seen its flashing

* This is the edible fruit of a passion flower of the Southern U. S. resembling a yellow apple, but is without much flavor.

* An imaginary line separating the Oriental and Australian regions. It passes between Bali and Lombok, between Celebes and Borneo, and to the eastward of the Philippines. Recent authors contend that it should pass east rather than west of Celebes. The faunas on either side of the line are remarkably distinct.

eyes. Mildred paid little attention to the hieroglyphics, leaving their deciphering to Professor Burke. The hideousness of the god fascinated her, and she declared that the fetish's eyes were hypnotic. And as for Professor Burke, he literally lost himself in trying to decipher the hieroglyphics. Between energetic pipe puffs he would occasionally emit an enigmatic, tantalizing "Ah!" and then relapse into silence, his eyes taking on the abstracted squint of puzzlement.

"Well, what do you make of them, Professor?" Ernest finally dared to interrupt his companion's brown study.

It was then that Professor Burke had said it couldn't be done, but he'd do it, adding that the Moonmen probably left a sort of Rosetta stone somewhere, but it would be useless to look for it, as it would contain nothing but equally perplexing writings.

Waxing poetic over the god and the other grotesque figures, he had quoted Poe:

They are neither man nor woman—
They are neither brute nor human—
They are ghouls.

NINE hours had passed since their coming to Mount Hadley. Already the chill that heralded the lunar night was in the air.

"Only a few more hours of light, and then the long sleep," Ernest remarked.

"No long sleep for me," Professor Burke asseverated. "I purpose to put every one of those blamed figures on paper and stay up until the next sun, if necessary, to decipher them."

"Suit yourself," Ernest smiled, "but Mildred and I are going to call it a day between making another trip to the base of the mountain. We want to make a closer study of the idol's eyes—and maybe we'll find that Rosetta stone."

They returned two hours later to find Professor Burke still sedulously engaged in transcribing the characters. He greeted them with an interrogatory grunt.

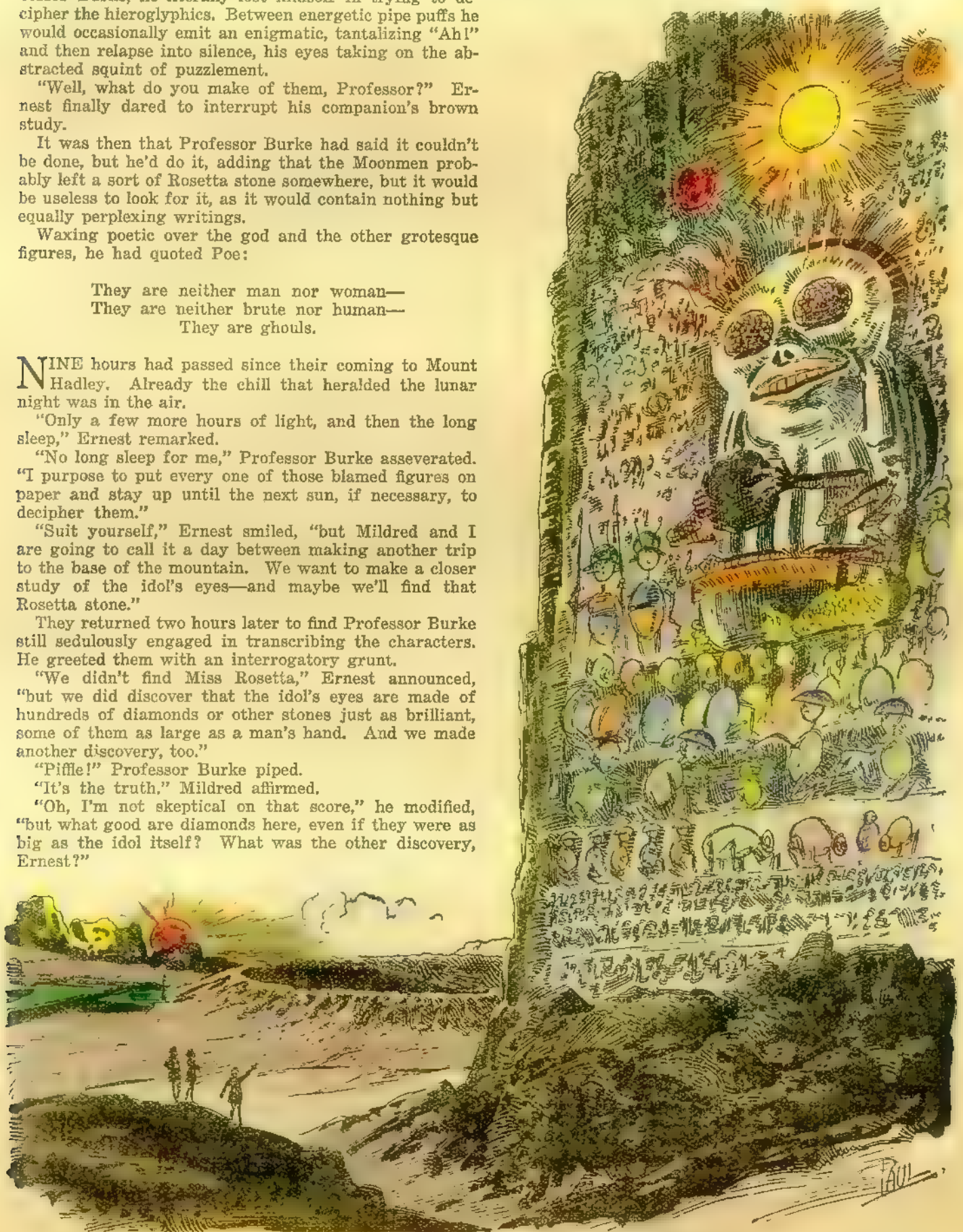
"We didn't find Miss Rosetta," Ernest announced, "but we did discover that the idol's eyes are made of hundreds of diamonds or other stones just as brilliant, some of them as large as a man's hand. And we made another discovery, too."

"Piffle!" Professor Burke piped.

"It's the truth," Mildred affirmed.

"Oh, I'm not skeptical on that score," he modified, "but what good are diamonds here, even if they were as big as the idol itself? What was the other discovery, Ernest?"

"That there is a cave just to the left of the pictured cliff large enough to house our plane. We will spend the night there, partly protected from the cold. The atoheaters would keep us comfortable, of course, but I



Two thousand feet the tablet towered; one thousand feet it stretched. A central figure of an uncouth Thing—was it male or female, god or devil? Before it, kneeling votaries almost as weirdly formed; above it, and on either side, long lines of lunar lore, below it, Titan figures telling mathematic art.

don't fancy the idea of camping out here on the plain."

Three more hours, and then came the lunar dusk. The temperature had tumbled below zero. Professor Burke had completed his transcription.

"Look!" Mildred exclaimed excitedly as Ernest was preparing to start the plane for the short trip to the cave.

A ball of greenish gold, so vast that it embraced nearly half of the lunar horizon, was climbing above the serrate mountains. It was Mother Earth rising to keep nocturnal vigil over her cold, dead daughter—Mother Earth, glorious in her own travail.

The planet glowed like a solid sheen of emerald diffused with topaz tint, and bathed the satellite in eldritch twilight.

"Oh, God, how beautiful!" Mildred ecstasied. She stretched her hands toward the luminous world.

Ernest recalled that her cry of joy was the same she had uttered when, as a child, she first looked through the "big gun" at Jupiter and his family of moons.

"And how beautiful you are," he heard himself whispering. "I sometimes think that the very gods that made you must wonder at your loveliness."

The girl, still enrapt, did not hear.

CHAPTER XIX

The Air Speaks

"ANYBODY there? Anybody there? Well, I'll be double damned!"

Professor Burke's colorful explosion woke his companions at the first crack of lunar dawn. They had divided the night into four periods, spending much of their "daytime" in reading, and each time they had roused or retired, Professor Burke was still poring over the figures copied from the cliff.

"What's the matter?" Ernest called from his bunk.

"The matter?" The Professor was plainly agitated. "Matter enough. We've been dreaming, that's all. We're still on Earth. I'd just fallen asleep after working nearly a million hours on those infernal hieroglyphics when the radio—but wait, you'll hear it yourself, in a moment."

"Hear what?" Mildred's voice rang out.

As if in answer to her query, a strident "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" came from the tubes.

"Shrill chanticleer pierces the dull ear of morn!" Professor Burke quoted dramatically. "What did I tell you? Blamed thing started crowing about ten minutes ago—loud enough to wake the dead. I've shouted 'Hello!' until I'm hoarse, but the only reply is——"

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" the radio aptly inserted.

"As Poe would say, 'only that and nothing more,'" the Professor finished.

"Maybe it's a dream, and we're dreaming we're back on Earth," Mildred suggested, her face framed in the curtains of her berth.

"I've got the answer!" Ernest flashed after a stupefied moment. "Another plane has landed on the moon! We've been here quite a while, you know, and I wouldn't be surprised if a flock of them had arrived."

"Just as I supposed," the Professor muttered. "Of course that's it."

"But why doesn't it answer?" Ernest continued. "Surely a cock is not its sole occupant. Try to get them again, Professor. I'll be with you directly."

Professor Burke again turned to the radio. "This is Professor Burke—Francis Burke—speaking," he boomed. "Hail, fellow Earthians! Greetings! I——"

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

"Dammit, I say!" the Professor snapped, and he sat down.

Ernest joined him a moment later, followed by Mildred, who was quivering with excitement.

"No wonder!" Ernest ejaculated after a hasty inspec-

tion of the radio. "The microphone is disconnected!"

Professor Burke slumped into his chair, and groaned. Ernest quickly adjusted the mechanism and shouted a hello.

Silence.

"Hello! Hello!"

And then, after a louder shout, the radio spoke.

"Daddy! Daddy!" a childish voice came through the air. "Wake up, Daddy! Someone is calling us!"

A moment later a masculine "hello!" was heard.

Ernest responded, his companions pressing close to the amplifier.

"This is Professor Ernest Sherard of Mount Shasta observatory," he enunciated. "My companions are Professor Burke of Burke observatory, and Mildred Reamer, my assistant. We believe we were the first to reach the moon. We are now in our plane in a cave under Mount Hadley, on the pictured side of the cliff."

"This is Dr. Elmo Harveston of Maidstone, England, and my little daughter, Thomasine," the voice returned. "Of course I have heard of you, and of Professor Burke, and understood you were the first to leave the earth. We reached the moon early last night—that is, about twenty-five hours ago. We landed on a plateau near a high mountain range—the Rook chain, I think. At least three other planes are here. I signaled them shortly after I arrived. One of them—wait a moment, please, until Thomasine carries her pet rooster into another compartment—he's crowing his head off—one of them was piloted by an American named Hogrefe, from Detroit. Brought his family and several relatives. A German named Eckhoff also is here, but I know very little German and couldn't talk with him. The third ship brought Antoine LaTaste, a young French engineer, and several children refugees he picked up in the Pyrenees. The planes are widely scattered. The American landed on a plain near a large crater. The German mentioned 'Bergen,' so I guess he's somewhere in the mountains. The Frenchman says he is near a great 'ditch' nearly a hundred miles long—the Alpine Valley, no doubt. But I suppose you have already heard from them, and from others, perhaps."

"No," Ernest told him, "we have been so busy studying the inscriptions on Mount Hadley that we completely forgot the radio until your rooster woke Professor Burke a few minutes ago. I suppose you were operating on a different wave length last night, or we would have heard your signals. Perhaps a dozen or more planes are here by this time."

Harveston expressed great interest in the hieroglyphics, and Ernest furnished a brief description, also telling him of the moon fetish.

The conversation then turned to their respective voyages to the moon, and Harveston said he had come so dangerously near the walls of space that his plane had all but tail-spun before he grasped the situation.

"I fear hundreds of ships will perish in the ether sea," Ernest commented gravely, "but there was no way of foretelling the danger."

"What are your immediate plans?" Harveston asked.

"We shall leave the cave as soon as the temperature permits. It is hardly daybreak yet, and we dare not venture out of the plane until the sun is up a few hours. Professor Burke tells me he wishes to take one more look at the hieroglyphics to verify some of his transcriptions. He worked on them nearly the whole night through and thinks the solution is in sight. Have you a map of the moon?"

"Yes."

"Well, our next stop will be the great crater of Tycho. I think an investigation of its white rays will prove most interesting in view of what we have already found at one of the smaller pits. Suppose you meet us there—in about six hours, say—and together we will signal at

various wave lengths to learn how many other planes have arrived. I don't think you will have much trouble locating the crater, because of the prominence of its rays, and you're much nearer it than we are."

It was agreed, and they signed off.

"Well, old comrade," Ernest turned to Professor Burke, "I suppose you'll be wanting to get a little more sleep while we're waiting on the sun."

"Yes, I might as well, as there's nothing else to do until I can check up on those inscriptions. But I'm not at all sleepy. There are some mortals who laugh at Morpheus, you know. It was said of Napoleon and Edison that they often went a week or more without sleep. They also were great men. I"—he tried in vain to suppress a yawn—"well, as I said, there's nothing to do until I can verify my copies. Think I missed a whole row of symbols. Don't let me sleep too long."

"Wait just a minute before you retire, Professor. I think I'll run the plane to the mouth of the cave, so that Mildred and I may watch the sunrise."

Five minutes later the move had been made and Ernest and Mildred were watching, in entranced silence, the indescribable glory of the lunar dawn. Professor Burke was snoring rapturously.

"Look!" Ernest cried suddenly, breaking the spell. He pointed skyward.

High over the plain, its wings gleaming in the sun's first rays, a huge shape was pictured against the sky.

"It's an atoliner!" Mildred exclaimed. "It's coming this way. Let's see if we can signal it!"

"No," Ernest demurred, "the radio might wake Professor Burke. We'll get them later."

They watched the great metal bird until it passed over them and was blotted out by the Apennines.

CHAPTER XX

The Crescent City

THE Crescent City, one of America's biggest atoliners, was flying low and leisurely over the lunar plains. The Apennines were five hundred miles behind. A tall, well-poised man of about thirty-five, whose white cap bore the insignia of captain, sat in the cockpit with the pilot and studied the lunar landscape through his binoculars. His dark eyes were boyish, adventurous, but his aquiline nose, firm mouth and square-set jaw bespoke resourcefulness and resolve.

He presently lowered his glasses and addressed the pilot: "A little to the left, Martin—that's about right. Straight ahead, now. I don't like the look of that sand down there. It's worse than Sahara. I think there's firmer ground a few miles ahead—it's darker, anyway."

Then, into the transmitter that carried his voice to every cabin: "We will land in a few minutes, but may have to stay in the ship several hours. There's plenty of air, but it will be too cold outside until the sun is up a while."

Immediately the atoliner became a Babel of excitement. The passengers, most of whom had been viewing the scene from their cabin windows, rushed pell-mell into the aisles and surged toward the doors, their voices a discord of agitation and rejoicing. The long journey was over. They were safe. The moon was theirs. The rays of the early sun beckoned, and they were eager to heed the call.

Ten minutes later the captain spoke again, and at his words the craft nosed into a long, graceful glide.

The *Crescent City* came to rest ten miles from the sea of sand, on an ashen plain whose smooth, slaty surface stretched interminably onward.

Once more the passengers surged toward the doors, but stopped abruptly. The gravitational change, felt only slightly while the plane was in motion, now rendered them helpless, ridiculous.

The captain faced them, stopped their rush with a word. "We'll have to learn to walk again," he said, as solemnly as possible. "We must stay in the ship for three or four hours. The thermometer shows it is eighty below zero outside. In the meantime we will try to ascertain if any voyagers have preceded us."

He led the wobbling, floundering Earthians to the radio room and seated himself before the microphone. The passengers gathered round and waited with bated breath as he turned the dial and shouted "Hello!" with each movement.

Presently they were rewarded. A clear "Hello!" came back. The salutation sounded eerie, impossible, like a voice that had followed them through space.

"This is Captain Sewell Ellington of *The Crescent City*, New Orleans," the man at the microphone shouted. "We have just arrived—seventy-five of us."

"Welcome to the moon!" the voice responded cheerfully.

"This is Dr. Elmo Harveston of Maidstone, England. Made the trip with my little daughter, in a small plane. Arrived about forty-five hours ago. Where are you?"

"Wish we knew. Haven't had time to get our bearings. Afraid the ship would founder in the sand, so we kept going until we reached an expanse of rock that's as smooth as a floor. It's one of the so-called seas, I think—the Mare Nubium or the Mare Humorum."

"Who are your passengers?"

"Mainly Louisianians and Texans who sought refuge on the mountains of Central America. Few Mexicans in the lot. Made the trip without mishap. *The Crescent City* was probably the first big atoliner to leave the earth. Left about seventy-five hours after Sherard's final message."

"Professor Sherard is here now—was the first to arrive," Harveston informed. "I was talking with him a few hours ago. Professor Francis Burke and Sherard's assistant, a young woman, are with him. They are in a cave under Mount Hadley, in the Apennines. At least three other planes have arrived."

"Is that so! What did Sherard have to say?"

Harveston gave a brief account of his conversations with Professor Sherard and the other Earthians, concluding with the suggestion that *The Crescent City* also proceed to Tycho. "If you are on the Mare Nubium you are only a few hundred miles from Tycho," he supplemented.

"Well, we'll be there, unless the sand prevents our landing," Ellington assured. "Farewell till then."

Doctor Harveston was the first to reach Tycho, parking his plane close to the crater. Leaving his sleeping child in her bunk, he immediately began to explore his surroundings, and his first discovery was that the walls of the pit were several thousand feet high, forming a stump-shaped eminence in the center of a vast, gently sloping saucer of dark rock which, in turn, was surrounded by a darker, lava-like substance against which the crater's enormous streamers, spreading in every direction, shone in glaring contrast.

He was scanning the almost perpendicular ramparts of Tycho, wondering if they could be scaled, when the hum of a motor caused him to turn. The huge bulk of *The Crescent City* loomed in the distance. It landed behind him, on a smooth space about a mile from the crater, near one of the great rays.

Its passengers immediately began streaming out of its several doors, many of them taking uncanny strides and falling over one another, befuddled by their new lightness. After several attempts, they were able to walk after a fashion. There were about thirty women in the group, some with babies in their arms, and these proceeded more cautiously, being assisted from the plane by the men.

Harveston, setting out to meet them, saw them gather round a tall, white-capped man whom he took to be Captain Ellington, whose gestures indicated that he was addressing them. He presently pointed toward Harveston

and a minute later started in his direction heading a procession that moved slowly and fantastically. Some of the Earthians held hands to avoid mishaps, but the most of them, except the women and some of the smaller children, made their own tedious way. There was much overstepping and consequent tumbles, some of which ended painfully on the hard surface.

"Where is Professor Sherard?" was Captain Ellington's first question when formal introductions were over.

"I'm wondering myself," Harveston replied. "Sherard said something about Professor Burke wanting to go over the hieroglyphics again, and I guess that is what is delaying him."

"Have you investigated the white rays yet?"

"From the air only. They radiate in every direction. Suppose we visit the nearest one while we're waiting on Sherard."

"I have an idea—"

Ellington's remark was cut short by an exclamation from a keen-eyed youngster.

"Look! Here she comes!"

Captain Ellington turned his binoculars on a speck against the sky in the direction of the Apennines. "It's Professor Sherard, I guess."

His supposition was correct. Five minutes later the first Earthians to reach the moon arrived at Tycho, their plane landing close to Harveston's machine. Ernest and Mildred alighted together and were immediately surrounded and warmly greeted.

"We saw *The Crescent City* pass over the mountains early this morning," Ernest addressed Captain Ellington, "but refrained from signaling because Professor Burke was asleep."

"And where is Professor Burke now?"

"His non-appearance is due to his having locked himself in his room with the declaration that he would stay there until he solved the mystery of Mount Hadley," Ernest explained.

"He thinks the solution is near," Mildred supplemented.

"We were starting out to study Tycho's white rays when you arrived," Harveston apprised Ernest. "Shall we go on, or signal the rest of the moon first?"

Ernest believed the signaling would be wisest, pointing out that some of the possible arrivals might be close by, and that it would be best to reach them before they took flight again. It was agreed that they would request all with whom they might communicate to join them at Tycho, and that they would meet an hour later and report results.

Ernest and Mildred returned to *The Pioneer* to find Professor Burke still poring over his hieroglyphics. Captain Ellington, having apprised his passengers of his object, was followed to *The Crescent City* by most of them. Harveston found his little daughter still asleep.

In a few minutes the signals of the three planes were sweeping the moon at every wave length.

At the end of the hour, Ernest reported having spoken with Hogrefe, the American whom Harveston had mentioned, and with an Italian named Casella, who believed he was in the Lunar Alps. Harveston told of conversing with a fellow-countryman named Banks, with a Canadian named Farrow, and with a Spaniard whose name he could not catch. Banks was somewhere on the plains, and the Canadian believed he was on the Mare Tranquillitatis. Captain Ellington had made only one connection, and that with the German, Eckhoff, who said he had left the mountains and landed near a crater. Each ship had brought from two to six passengers, mainly the families and relatives of the owners.

No trace has been found of the Frenchman, LaTaste, whom Harveston had signaled during the night.

"I move that we now visit the nearest ray," Ernest said. "I think we shall find it most interesting." He

then told Ellington of his discoveries at the small crater of Reaumur.

Mildred accompanying them, they soon reached the ray and found, as Ernest had anticipated, that it was one of many skillfully executed channels designed to carry water to the crater by gravity. The bottom of the course was of the same marble-like material Ernest and his companions had observed at Reaumur, and the sides were plastered with the whitish cement they had seen there.

The ditch at this point was half a mile wide and not more than a hundred feet deep, but was narrower and deeper toward the crater and less straight in the other direction, following the wide valleys of the slightly undulating topography.

"Suppose we follow the channel to the base of the rampart," Ernest proposed. "I believe the tunnels through the wall will be large enough for us to enter and explore the interior."

"And how thick are the walls, do you suppose?" Mildred asked.

"Probably a thousand feet or more. We will have to use our pocket atlights."

They found that Tycho's tunnels were about fourteen feet in diameter and straight as a rifle bore, though they seemed to have been fashioned with crude tools.

"Tycho reminds me of a mouse trap—one of those with holes all around," Mildred laughed.

"And it may prove to be a trap, precipitating us into the pit, unless we watch our step," Ernest cautioned as they prepared to enter the darkness.

The base of the wall was even thicker than Ernest had reckoned. They had gone more than a thousand feet before they saw light at the other end of the bore.

The interior of the ring-plain was bathed in sunlight when they reached the tunnel's end, and they were awed by the scene that greeted them, stunned by the vastness of it all; it was so great in diameter that the eye could not encompass it; the basin was shaped like a shallow cup and as smooth in places as asphalt. Its central region, barely visible to the unaided eye, appeared to be not more than a thousand feet below the level of the moon's surface.

The Earthians first viewed the great bowl through their binoculars, and then through a small telescope which Captain Ellington had with him. The latter glass revealed a circle of openings near the center.

"What are they, Sherard—more tunnels?" Harveston inquired.

"Aqueducts," Ernest replied. "They probably carried water to the distant habitations of the Moonmen. You will notice that the deeper crevices in the floor of the reservoir have been filled with cement. It must have taken the Lunarians many centuries—millenniums, perhaps—to complete this work."

"Millenniums," Harveston echoed pensively, and they again gazed into the immensity of the basin lost in thought.

Ernest's voice broke the silence.

"Let's return to the planes," he said.

CHAPTER XXI

Luna's Story

THE temporary camp was in a commotion when the explorers returned.

Another plane had arrived, and the *Crescent Citizens* were gathered round it.

Two men were standing by the new ship, gesticulating wildly, vying for voice.

One was Professor Burke. The other's speech advertised him as Gallic; his dapper appearance as a Parisian.

Professor Burke, on seeing Ernest and Mildred, plunged toward them.

"I have found it!" he shouted. "I've solved the lunar riddle! Let me tell you!"

"Just a minute, Professor," Ernest restrained. "Let me welcome the new arrival."

"I am Antoine La Taste, late of Paris," the stranger introduced himself in fair English. "I have the great story! I come from the far mountains of the moon where I found—"

"Once more I ask you, my friend, to wait till I tell my story," Professor Burke barked.

Ernest finally prevailed upon their companion to let LaTaste have his way.

"I reached the moon just before the frozen darkness fell," the Frenchman began dramatically. "Mon Dieu, it was the long night! I landed in the mountains near a great valley that is a mile deep, several miles wide and I don't know how long. We stayed there—the children and I—until the daylight came again. We were off with the sun, flying in what I took to be a northerly direction. The mountains were soon behind us and beneath us lay a sandy plain dotted with small craters. In about three hours we came to another mountain range. It was much higher than the one we left and much more rugged. Its peaks rose like fountains of the lava, overlapping in many places. Imagine my surprise to find a circular plain in the midst of the mountains. I was nearly across it before I saw the something that made me reconsider, all of the sudden. In the center of the plain was a deep basin, and round it the ruins of many buildings!"

He paused for effect and breath and then went on:

"I landed near the ruins and explored them for about two hours. The sun was well up by that time and it was getting warm. Well, there's not much to tell of the buildings—there wasn't much left standing except some columns—but listen: those columns were inscribed with characters that would addle the Chinaman. And then I made another discovery. I was sweeping the plain with my binoculars, to see what I could see, when my attention was attracted by what seemed to be rows of openings at the bases of the encircling mountains. Focusing my glasses, I discovered that they were doors, and that the walls around them also were covered with the strange writing. I didn't visit the caves—it seemed quite possible that some terrible, unknown creatures were lying in wait in their depths. So, after taking the few snapshots of the ruins, I returned to the plane and left in another direction. I kept going until the greatest surprise of all met my gaze—your camp down here."

The momentary silence that followed the Frenchman's strange narrative was blasted by Professor Burke.

"Congratulations, my friend!" he exclaimed, stepping forward and giving LaTaste's hand a vigorous shake. "What you have told us is part of my own story. Now they will believe me. Draw close, all of you, and I will bare the secrets of the moon."

The Professor drew himself to his full height and donned his full dignity as he began in impressive tones:

"Know you that Luna is Terra's child, but older than her mother in point of life evolved. The Lunarians had reached the apex of their civilization when we Earthians were still troglodytes—when man slew man in bestial rage and ate the marrow of his bones."

"Life appeared here vast ages before it did on Earth for the reason that the moon, being a much smaller body, cooled in a comparatively short time.

"The Moonmen have been extinct for at least 500,000 years, but I have deciphered their history as recorded on the face of Mount Hadley.

"As to how I solved the mystery, an outline must suffice at this time. All picture writings we knew on Earth had common characteristics, and I proceeded on the hypothesis that a similar relation existed here—

that is, that the characters on Mount Hadley were ideographic, composed, in large measure, of objects represented by pictures and signs. I soon discovered, however, that the lunar symbols were partly phonographic, indicating that the Moonmen had reached a stage in the evolution of writing, if not in civilization, comparable to that of the ancient Egyptians.

"So far, so good; but the fact that many of the objects familiar to the Moonmen had no earthly counterpart presented a blank wall. Some of them were easy enough, however. For example, their sun and star symbols were almost identical with those devised by the prehistoric Earthians. And so with their water symbols—horizontal wavy lines representing a sea or lake, according to their length, and perpendicular wavy lines under an arch denoting rain.

"With these definable characters as a nucleus, my task was to make the unknown symbols identify themselves by establishing their relationship to the known signs, much as a child reconstructs a picture from cuts of cardboard.

"But for a long time I could not make the characters arrange themselves, and more than once I was about ready to admit failure. Hieroglyphics have always been my hobby, however, so I carried on. But for my familiarity with all picture writings known on Earth, the lunar legends would have forever remained a mystery, so far as I am concerned.

"Well, I decided that I could be as obstinate as the symbols, and, to condense the story, I concluded their translation less than an hour ago. The work is not so complete as I should like. There are a number of breaks which I had to fill in deductively, but I am confident the translation is essentially correct.

"Millions of years ago—probably during the late Oligocene era of Earth—the Moonmen, then in the dawn of their civilization, were dwellers of the plains. Ages later, probably during our late Miocene era, they had attained a degree of civilization comparable to that on which Earth's curtain of history rose. It was then that they devised their picture writing and became builders instead of nomads. The dawn of another era—which I place at about 600,000 years ago—found the Lunarians nearing the peak of their progress.

"It was then that their Great Change began. The moon had been gradually receding from Earth throughout the ages, and was losing its atmosphere and its heat. Fifty thousand years more, and their lakes, many of which were located in the beds of craters, were little more than pools. Their mountain streams—there were no real rivers—had dwindled to ice-choked rivulets. The globe was becoming dessicate and frigid.

"Eventually the lengthening nights became so cold as to preclude life in the plain cities. The Moonmen then sought refuge in the mountains, in natural caves which they later enlarged and extended till the hills were all but undermined. Here, in the bowels of the mountains, they spent their nights, and during the long days of the last few thousand years they worked at one thing only—hoarding their scant rainfall.

"The hieroglyphics on Mount Hadley tell of their pitiful struggle. It took them ten thousand years to hollow out the mountains, and five thousand more to convert the craters into reservoirs. Some of the pits were natural basins and needed no 'white rays.' Channels had to be dug to most of them, however—thousands of them. The rays of all but a few are now covered with sand, due to moonquakes or other disturbances. They labored for millenniums, but were impotent against the greater catastrophe—the dying atmosphere, though toward the last they devised a crude sort of fan to carry the air into their caves.

"The ruins which Monsieur LaTaste discovered mark

the site of one of their earliest refuges. Many thousands went there during the first hegira and built a city on the mountain sheltered plain. This city, a real metropolis, lasted more than a thousand years, but the cold finally forced its inhabitants to abandon it and bore into the mountains.

"An elaborate system of underground cities ultimately penetrated every mountain range except the Apennines. These were their sacred hills, kept inviolate as the domain of their god, the great He-She, whose fancied likeness had been fashioned on the face of Mount Hadley in the heyday of their civilization.

"The hieroglyphics indicate that their greatest cave city was in what we know as the Dorfel Mountains, due to the proximity of the huge craters, Bailly and Clavius, the pits of which, like those of nearly all the principal rings, had been converted into natural reservoirs holding the water conducted to their caves through underground aqueducts. There was another great city under the Liebnitz Mountains. This range, according to the inscriptions, is composed partly of pure marble—their White Mountains—and it was here that they procured the material for constructing the 'white rays' which carried water into the reservoirs, the stone being hauled across the plains in vehicles pulled by 'mules' which resembled gigantic fleas.

"He-She was their one and only god. Part male, part female, the fetish was represented as sexless in the belief that he—it, rather—had subdued all passions. Its likeness was built in bas-relief on Hadley with its face turned toward Earth, and its eyes, fifteen feet in diameter, were constructed of hundreds of great diamonds. Yes, real diamonds, my friends.

"The Moonmen looked upon the vast ball of the earth as an evil entity, a thing that was driving them farther into space and devouring their air, and they supplicated their idol to combat its power. Their sages seemed to realize that the planet was inhabited, for in the latter days they had the lunar sculptors and artisans picture the moon's tragic history on the wall round the idol, possibly as an appeal for assistance.

"Their religion was sacrificial. Huge statues of He-She were erected in each cave of the cave cities and the victims were legion. It seems they were crushed to death between a sort of mortar and pestle contraption in the idol's lap.

"Due to the feeble gravity, the Moonmen evolved along lines almost entirely different from those of their earthly kin. They were fully eleven feet tall, huge-headed and partly insectiform in structure, though they were distinct vertebrates and human in several ways. During the last fifty thousand years of their tribulation, however, they underwent a pronounced physical metamorphosis, due to climatic and atmospheric changes. Their bodies became exceedingly bulbous as their lungs expanded to enormous proportions, their nostrils distended and their ears enlarged. Their skin thickened, and toward the last Nature was giving them hair as a protection against the cold. Much of the moon's lower life vanished during the transition, and if there were birds, they must have disappeared quite early, as nothing with wings is represented on the cliff.

"I have said that the end came about 500,000 years ago. A million years might be nearer the mark. They sketched a map of Earth on Mount Hadley, and the picture shows the isthmus that once connected North America and Asia at Bering Strait, and a continent that must have been Atlantis.

"Well, the symbols tell many other things, including a legend that there once was a great ocean on the other side of the moon, but if you'll glance at the sky I think you'll find it more interesting. It looks as though it's going to rain!"

CHAPTER XXII

Burke Forebodes

THE lunar skies were streaked with straggling veils of vapor so diaphanous that they seemed to doubt their own existence.

On Earth this would have portended only another dismal day; here it seemed a miracle, and the aliens from the larger sphere watched with wonder's open eyes.

The ghostly wisps of gray moved slowly, hesitantly, as if realizing their alienage and fearing to unite. But after a while they dared to be united, writhing sinuously and then meeting and merging to form a denser whole. It was then that the Earthians became aware that a goodly breeze was stirring, and that the air was slightly humid.

And when the terrific sun itself was all but obliterated, Professor Burke's voice rose above the hushed tones of his companions, the first to break the spell.

"At last the moon shall touch her lips to drink," he intoned impressively, absently, as if addressing his muse. "Soon comes the rain, and Luna's awful thirst will be assuaged. Napoleon said to his soldiers: 'The centuries look down upon you.' I say, that between these clouds and the last gray whirls that flecked the lunar sky, five thousand centuries look down."

"Do you think there'll be a storm?" asked Mildred who, with Ernest, Captain Ellington, Doctor Harveston and LaTaste, was standing near the Professor.

"Hardly that," he smiled, remembering the girl's love of nature's violent moods. "It will be no more than a gentle rain—maybe only a heavy mist. I fear we shall not hear the thunder's muttered crash. What do you say, Ernest?"

"I guess you're right, but I was hoping there would be a real downpour. I'm no weather prophet, but I'll predict there won't be any rain for an hour or so, and I suggest that in the meantime the six of us go over to my plane and decide on our next move. I've got the wanderlust."

"Well, Sherard, what do you propose?" Ellington asked when the conference was opened round Ernest's radio table.

"That we explore the sub-montane cities," he submitted. "We may have to stay here a long time, unless the moon crashes into the earth, and I believe the caves will provide shelter. It is possible that we shall be able to establish very habitable quarters there, with the aid of our atomeat. Do the caves contain real rooms, Professor?"

"The hieroglyphics are not so clear on that point, but I believe we shall find well-designed halls and apartments—minus windows, of course. The Lunarians were clever artisans, and their temples were things of beauty. So I should think they employed their skill and artistry in fashioning their mountain dens."

"Fine," Ernest commented. "We Earthians may be able to set up regular housekeeping provided we can get enough water and devise a method of ventilation. The water question is paramount, of course. The supply we brought with us won't last much longer. Any suggestions?"

"I think the rain will solve the problem," Professor Burke offered. "We won't get much from the clouds that have just gathered, but probably enough to form small pools in the lowest parts of some of the reservoirs."

"But how will we get the water to the caves?" Harveston asked. "It would require a depth of several feet to put in the aqueducts."

"I was coming to that," Burke said. "My suggestion is that we establish ourselves in the caves of the Dorfel Mountains, near the great pit of Bailly. We could then readily fetch the water in our planes. Bailly and Clavius, it appears, are natural reservoirs surrounded by declivitous land which made the construction of channels un-

necessary. I am confident the rain will be quite copious before long. The air is becoming more humid every day."

"Do you think we should start for the caves at once?" Ellington asked.

"Yes, and I move that we forthwith place Professor Sherard in charge of the expedition and have him name the starting hour."

"Only if Professor Burke is given equal authority," Ernest amended, and it was agreed.

"Then I second the suggestion that we start at once," Ernest said. "The night is less than fifteen hours off, and we should lose no time in getting into the caves. But it would not be well for all of the planes to go at once. Some of us should remain at Tycho and keep the radios busy signaling other Earthians who may arrive before the darkness comes. I therefore suggest that only one plane make the initial trip and return to guide the rest of us after locating suitable caves."

"Ah, the plan is the good one, the wise one," LaTaste put in. "And for certain the distinguished Professors Sherard and Burke, who discovered the moon and know most about it, shall be the ones to discover the caves. I so propose, if I am in the order."

"I agree with Monsieur LeTaste," Harveston said. "Sherard and Burke, renowned lunarians even before The Great Change began, and who 'discovered' the moon, as LaTaste puts it, are best qualified as pioneers in the undertaking at hand. The decision rests with them, of course."

"We gladly volunteer for the trip," Ernest responded after noting Professor Burke's assenting nod. "and here-with place Captain Ellington in charge of the temporary camp while we are absent. We will signal you immediately we locate the caves, and return as speedily as possible. Bailly is only a few hundred miles off, and it is probable we shall be gone only two or three hours, but during that time a number of other planes may arrive here in response to your signaling. Every plane should be prepared for flight by the time we return. Does this meet with your approval?"

All replied in the affirmative except Mildred, who had been a silent auditor.

"Speak up, Mildred," Ernest said. "You're a member of the committee, you know."

"Then I vote against the plan unless I am permitted to go with you."

"Ah, the venturesome mademoiselle, as brave as she is fair!" exclaimed LaTaste with old-world gallantry. "She has my vote to go."

"Certainly you shall go," Ernest laughed. "We'd be lost without you, wouldn't we, Professor?"

"As lost as our own world is," Burke said. "It will be a great journey, but something tells me one of us shall never return." His voice became grave. "I have always scoffed at prescience and the like, and now I'm beginning to believe in it. I have persistent presentiment that the mountains are the end of the road for me. Fate, perhaps, but I've always held that fate and chance were one. I had a strange dream during my last sleep. It seemed that I was standing before the great He-She on Mount Hadley, studying its hideous physiognomy, when its lips formed a malicious leer and uttered my name with a hellish cry of vengeance. The nightmare lingers."

"Nonsense!" Ernest enjoined, puzzled at his companion's gloomy turn. "You have simply overtaxed your nerves struggling with those hieroglyphics. I don't think there is any danger ahead of us, but I insist that you stay behind and take a long nap."

"You must, Professor; please do," Mildred pleaded. "Ernest and I can see it through. I demand that you stay."

"No, my child," he soothed. "I must go. If fate decrees my finish, why rebel? See, I've become a fatalist overnight. If my foreboding is nonsense, as Ernest says, no

harm will come of my going—we will have a good laugh over it when we return. I haven't been feeling quite myself for some hours, and maybe the trip will revive me. Besides, I want to explore the bottom of one of the big craters. I believe I shall find proof of the theory that the pits are the remains of gigantic bubbles raised by volcanic gases when the moon was molten. The very shallow cup of Bailly will offer an excellent opportunity for study. Yes, I must go, Mildred. Only a coward is frightened by dreams—or by death itself, for that matter."

Further expostulation only rousing him to anger, Ernest and Mildred reluctantly consented to his going, and decided to start at once.

"But let's go out first and see if it is raining," Mildred said.

They stepped into a fine mist that trickled off the back of *The Pioneer* in apologetic globules. Going over to *The Crescent City*, they found most of the Earthians gathered round it, reveling in the moisture like children in a summer shower.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Dorfels

THE mist was turning into a light drizzle when Ernest and his companions left Tycho, and the Earthians who had gathered around *The Pioneer* to bid them well were soon lost in the blur.

"I would rather have waited until the rain was over," Ernest said, "but we haven't a minute to lose. I think I'll go above the clouds to get into the sunlight. The clouds are low, and we should be able to see the peaks above them."

He tilted the ship sharply upward and they soon were flying over a shoreless sea of whirling vapor.

"Take your binoculars and look out for the mountains, Professor," Ernest said, after a while. "I think we're headed straight for the Dorfels, but the higher summits of the Liebnitz chain may come into view first. They should appear to the left of us, near the south pole."

The pale bulk of Terra, blotting out much of the sky, seemed menacingly near in the bright sunlight of the high altitude, and Mildred was filled with nostalgic yearning as she viewed it.

"How near is the earth now?" she asked.

"About forty-seven thousand miles," Ernest informed. "The moon has slowed down greatly since we landed, and will continue to do so until it comes to a full stop, about twenty-five thousand miles from Earth. That is only an estimate, of course. It may stop at thirty thousand, but I think my calculation is about correct. Toward the last it will advance less than a hundred miles a day, and that means it will be at least a month before it pauses."

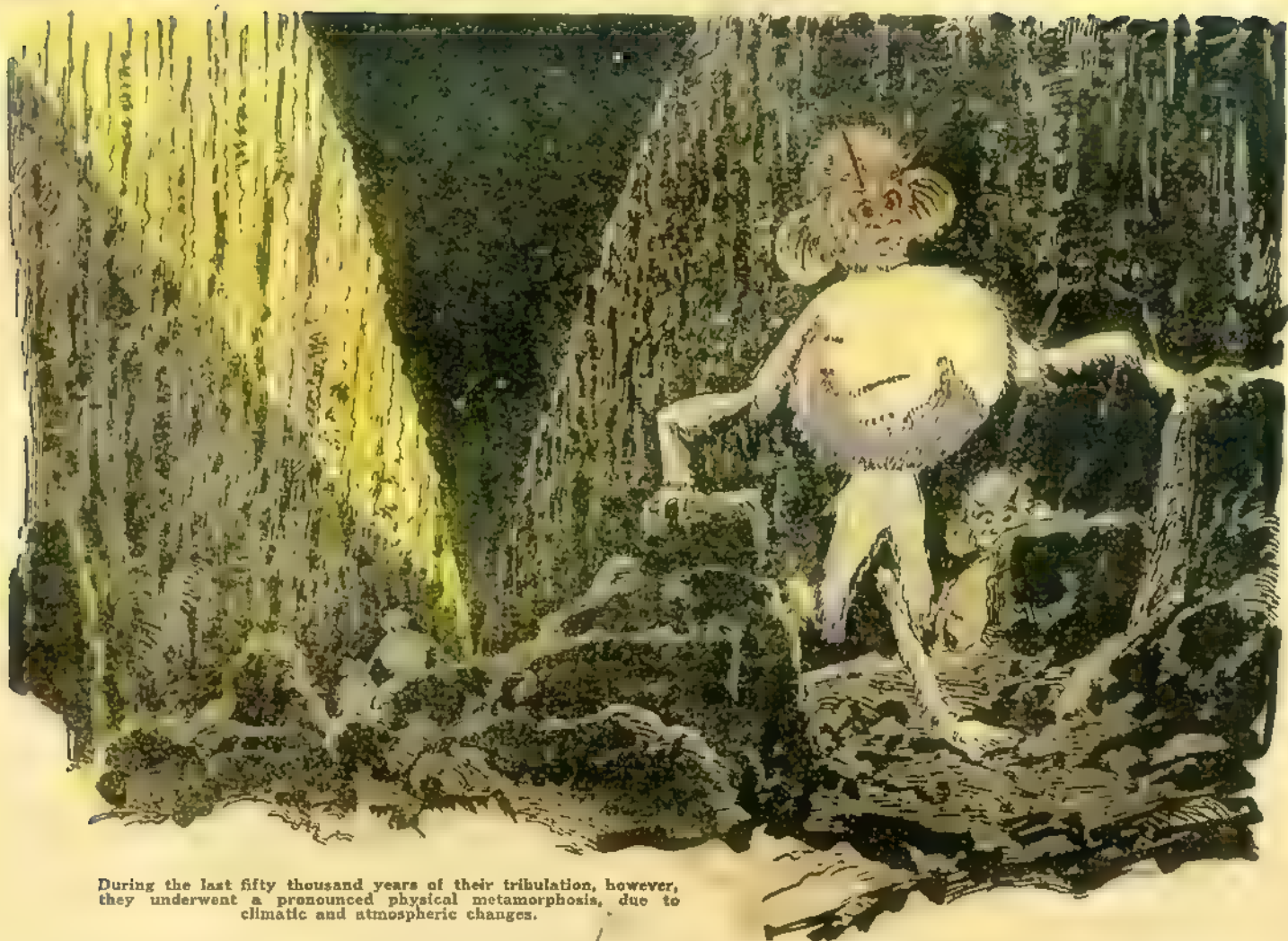
"And if it doesn't pause?" Professor Burke queried gloomily. "We have no guaranty it will, remember."

"I'll admit it's not in the contract," Ernest replied, "but I'm sure it will. Otherwise, we'll return home in a hurry."

"Remarkable!" Burke grunted. "And if we do, the resultant crash will hold no terrors for me. The spirit of that infernal fetish is calling for me, I tell you."

"For God's sake, don't talk like that!" Ernest protested. "You'll give us the megrims. I predict we will not only return from the caves, but will get back to Earth safely. Cheer him up, Mildred. Suppose you get my telescope and look at the earth, Professor. Maybe you and Mildred can see what's going on up there."

The Professor laughed dryly. "A clever ruse to make me forget. Of course we can't see what's happening on Earth with the sun shining full against it, while it is broad daylight on the moon. It's almost as pale as



During the last fifty thousand years of their tribulation, however, they underwent a pronounced physical metamorphosis, due to climatic and atmospheric changes.

the 'day' moon used to appear from Earth. But we'll look, just the same."

And then, his voice carrying sadness and hurt: "I know I'm not myself, Ernest, and I wish I could snap out of it. I've never felt this way before."

He went to Ernest's compartment and returned with the small telescope. "Well, perhaps we shall return to Terra some day," he muttered as he turned the instrument to a window facing the planet, "but my motto is, 'never expect anything and you won't be disappointed.' You look first, Mildred."

"It looks like bronze, and it's so big I can't see all of it," the girl announced after a minute's study. "But I think I can see markings on it. It looks cracked."

"It's cracked, all right, and always was," the Professor fulminated after a brief glance through the tube.

"That means it hasn't become a solid ball of ice, and that there is hope," Ernest commented. "Its breakneck velocity is keeping the ice moving. It's a glacial age such as the globe has never known. I want to study it by night, the first chance I get."

Tycho was an hour behind them when the forbidding Liebnitz peaks hove into view, and a few minutes later Mildred, using the Professor's binoculars, announced the sight of the Dorfels.

Ernest nosed the plane downward. "We'd better get back under the clouds so we can be on the watch for the caves," he explained. "They may be on the other side of the range, you know. And besides, I don't care to risk running into the lower peaks."

The rain was reverting to mist when they emerged from the clouds. Beneath them lay a plain of the same sandy formation as that round Reaumur. No mountains were in sight.

"The Dorfels are about two hundred miles distant, I think," Ernest said, "and unless the mist disappears we may not be able to see them until we are nearly on them. We'll have to go slow, as there may be foothills. Keep a sharp watch for them."

Mildred, still using the Professor's glasses, soon announced the appearance of miniature craters, and after they had loitered along about fifty more miles, the ramparts of a great pit became visible.

"It's Bailly, no doubt," Ernest said. "Suppose you hand the glasses to Professor Burke; he may want to inspect the crater as we pass over."

"Yes, it may be my only opportunity," the Professor lamented. More cheerfully: "The mountains are just on the other side, aren't they?"

"About seventy miles beyond, I should say," Ernest replied, remarking the forced buoyancy of the query. "We could see them now, but for the mist."

The moonscape became slaty and sloping as they neared the crater.

Bailly proved to be even shallower than Professor Burke had anticipated. The ramparts of the great oblong bowl were not more than four thousand feet high and were pierced at the base by water bores to drain the surrounding lowlands. And when *The Pioneer* had topped the ramparts and dropped to a lower level, its occupants found that the interior of the pit was conspicuously different from that of Tycho. Instead of the tunnels ending at the inside rim, they continued, in the form of aqueducts, for several miles, resting on arches built over a bed of lava-like rock so porous that its fissures overlapped.

"It looks like petrified sponge," Professor Burke submitted. "It is evident that the holes were made by escaping gas, and I'm satisfied the craters were formed

by huge bubbles. But if Bailly was used as a reservoir, why wasn't its bottom cemented like that of Tycho?"

Ernest could offer no explanation.

"I see!" the Professor exclaimed upon turning his glasses toward the center of the basin. "Only the deepest part is cemented—out there where the aqueducts end. And there are no feeders coming in from the other side."

The center of Bailly was found to be a depression some twelve miles in diameter, forming a great bowl which evidently had been enlarged and deepened by the Moonmen, and into which the connecting aqueducts once poured their precious burden. The basin was so smoothly plastered that it seemed enameled, and at its bottom, forming a semi-circle on the side nearest the Dorfels, was a row of openings which they took to be the mouths of water mains leading to the mountains.

"Look!" cried Professor Burke, pointing toward the deepest part of the bowl. "Look!"

Water—a tiny pool of it—was there.

The Pioneer was over the farther ramparts when Mildred espied the peaks of the Dorfels. The mist was vanishing and the clouds beginning to rift.

The Dorfels were downhill from Bailly, the declension starting just beyond the crater's rim and becoming more pronounced each mile. No pressure had been needed to carry the water to the sub-montane dwellings.

The mountains rose sheer from the foot of the decline, presenting an almost perpendicular cliff similar to the wall of Mount Hadley.

Ernest first sighted the Dorfel caves, and almost simultaneously Mildred called attention to the crumbled ruins of several buildings some three miles in front of the mountains.

The caves dotted the base of the cliff its entire length, a distance of several miles. Most of the openings were uniformly small and square, but near the center of the row yawned a relatively large circular aperture. It was toward this opening that Ernest aimed the plane.

"I'd like to detour and explore the ruins," he said, "but we'll leave that for another day."

The Pioneer came to rest about a hundred yards from the big cave. Professor Burke hurried out and was the first to reach the entrance.

"Just as I thought," he said when his companions joined him. "The inscriptions say that this is the cave of the mighty He-She—the place of the sacrifice. Let's hurry and explore the other caves—I want to make the acquaintance of the lunar god."

"Well, let's go back to the plane and get our pocket atollights," Ernest proposed. "And we'll signal the folks at Tycho that we have found the caves. I guess they think it's about time they should hear from us."

But two hours were to pass before they entered the caverns. Just as they reached *The Pioneer* a great darkness descended. Monstrous Earth was coming between the satellite and the sun.

CHAPTER XXIV

Trapped

"FIVE more planes and one atoliner have arrived. The liner is from Buenos Aires, and brings sixty passengers."

Captain Ellington's voice came faintly, the eclipse affecting the radio. Ernest had signaled him immediately upon returning to *The Pioneer*, telling him of the discovery of the caves.

"The liner is *The Pinzona* and is commanded by Senor Ricardo Castello," Ellington continued. "Three of the planes are from the United States. The first to reach Tycho brought Governor Teale of California and his party. Hogrefe, the Detrouer, and Eckhoff, the German, both of whom were signaled by Harveston last

night, were next in order, having met en route. The atoliner came in a few minutes later, followed by a ship from Augusta, Georgia, bringing a lawyer named Wright and his family. The last plane to arrive before the darkness fell is from Switzerland, and brings a young man named Ferrier and several children refugees he picked up in the Alps. The voyagers were widely scattered, and most of them had been on the moon many hours. We have swept the moon at every wave length and communicated with eleven other planes from almost as many countries. President Carmonne of France is in one of them. The eclipse is delaying them, but all should be here by the time you return."

A running conversation in which Ernest gave further directions as to the flight to the caves continued until *The Pioneer* was no longer in the shadow of the earth.

"Goodbye," Ernest then called, "we are leaving to explore the caves."

"Good luck," Ellington returned. "It's still dark here."

The sun was shining brightly when they left the plane, the last veils of mist having vanished during the eclipse.

"Which cave shall we explore first?" Mildred asked when they again stood before the gaping abode of the moon fetish.

"We'll let Professor Burke decide, provided he doesn't insist on the cave of He-She," Ernest answered. "Come on, Professor." He had stopped in front of the idol's abode and was studying the inscriptions as if glued to the spot. "Come on and read what's written round some of the other doors so we will know when we have reached our future apartments. Suppose we investigate the row to the left of us first."

"Well, look what's here!" the Professor ejaculated when they reached the next aperture. "Ernest, there's wealth in there that would make a Croesus of each of us. This particular hole-in-the-wall houses the precious stones that the Lunarians fetched from far and near to place near their god. I don't know what kind of stones are in there, but I'll wager there are loads of diamonds."

"Perhaps we'll find time to explore it before we leave," Ernest said, moving on.

The writing round the next entrance advertised it as the sanctum of one of the high priests of He-She.

"Just as I expected," Burke growled, "and I predict there's a long row of them before we come to the humble domiciles of the laity. The blackcoats have always monopolized protection of the gods, and gained protection thereby. The carving round this cave says that it was the business of its occupant to see that He-She was not mocked, and—say, Ernest, haven't you noticed anything peculiar about the formation of this cliff? No? Well, what do you say to this?" He pointed to one of many yellow veins with which the rock was interstratified. "It's gold! The mountains are full of it!"

"It looks like gold, all right, but are you sure?"

"I'll stake my reputation on it. The writing on Mount Hadley told of a soft, abundant ore which the Lunarians had learned to harden and put to practical uses. Most of their tools and household fixtures were made of it. Why this is a golden world! No wonder the Cosmic Architect put a great void between it and Earth. Elae, the moon would have been carted away by this time. And I'll wager that some of those back at Tycho will try to mine the gold, and rob the caves of their diamonds."

"Well, I have always said the moon was golden, despite what the poets sang," Mildred sparkled.

"But we may find plenty of silver, too," Ernest laughed.

"See, the veins are everywhere," the Professor continued as they moved to the next opening. "I wonder how the Moonmen tempered the stuff. I must find out,

if it's my last discovery. I think I'll ask He-She, when I'm being devoured."

The next five caves were those of priests of lesser ranks, and then they came to a somewhat larger door round which were hundreds of hieroglyphics.

"It's the door of death," the Professor announced dramatically after a brief scrutiny. "We are now at the entrance of the lunar catacombs. It was here that the dead of the cave city were brought. The inscriptions say that the 'hall' extends nearly a mile and leads to a labyrinth of larger cavities which constituted the catacombs. I wonder if the Moonmen were embalmers. The writings are not clear on that point. And if they were, it is likely that their frail bodies returned to dust hundreds of centuries ago. Do you want to go in and explore the tombs, Mildred?"

The girl shuddered. "I'm too imaginative to go in there, even if we had time. I'd be seeing wraiths everywhere."

"Well, here we are," the Professor apprised at the next opening, which was some distance from the door of the necropolis. "This is the beginning of the Moonmen's habitations. Shall we go in?"

Ernest suggested that they go farther down the "street" to ascertain its probable length.

"A good idea. It's a pity the doors aren't numbered so we could learn what block we're on." The Professor seemed to have emerged from his doldrums.

"The inscriptions deal principally with the names of the occupants," the Professor imparted as they moved on, pausing at each door. "The names are meaningless. I can't translate them into words we might pronounce."

"Since it appears that the caves continue indefinitely, suppose we go no farther," Ernest proposed when they were nearly a mile from their starting point. "It is certain there is room for all the Earthians likely to reach the moon. This cave looks as good as any, and if the Professor is willing, we'll go in and look it over and then hurry back to the plane."

They flashed their lights and entered the darkness, the Professor leading and Ernest holding Mildred's hand. The strong shafts of light danced feebly, eerily, in the forbidding gloom ahead. The shadows moved like animate things, like sullen and sinister entities, rueful, resentful, malignant.

Stepping slowly and cautiously, the explorers swept the interior with their atolights until the rebellious shadows were dispersed enough to reveal a circular chamber some eighty feet in diameter whose vaulted top and smooth walls attested lunar artisanship. Hundreds of inscriptions and numerous drawings were cut into the rock, and many large strata of the yellow ore came into view.

"This was a sort of parlor where they gathered during the warmer part of the day," Professor Burke observed. "Let's look for the outlet—I mean the entrance to their living quarters. I should say—say, what's this!"

His foot had struck something that emitted a metallic ring. He focused his light on the object as his companions drew nearer.

"It's a table—no, it's a sort of seat. And look—it's made of tempered gold!"

It was a narrow bench similar in construction to those they had known on Earth except that its legs were longer. It was lying on its side.

The Professor bent over it for a closer examination. "It's gold, all right," he confirmed, "and I suppose there's more of them lying round. We'll have to be careful."

Mildred made the next discovery. "Look! There it is! Turn your lights on the farther side of the wall!"

The three rays disclosed a passage that led toward the bowels of the mountains—a square tunnel which seemed to hold the pent-up darkness of a thousand Hades—

a blackness which the powerful atolights pierced, but failed to diffuse.

"Must we really go in?" Mildred asked apprehensively. Her imagination pictured the darkness as that of Erebus itself, and she fancied she could hear the lamentations of the lost as they trod down the dusky aisle into eternal night.

"Don't be afraid, little girl," Professor Burke said gently. "There's nothing to harm us. The darkness cannot kill."

"I don't think there is any danger," Ernest reassured, "but if you wish, you can remain at the door until the Professor and I return. We won't be gone long."

"Oh, no," Mildred protested. "What if you should get lost in there? I was a little nervous, but I'm quite all right now. I insist on going."

Holding hands, they made their way to the passage and entered cautiously. Their atolights illuminated their path only a few feet.

"Well, the floor seems solid enough," the Professor remarked. It was scarcely more than a whisper, but echoes, wakened from their eon of sleep, reverberated ominously and boomed back the words.

"And so do the walls," Ernest observed after they had gone a goodly distance. "The Lunarians were adept burrowers, at least."

They were fully a quarter of a mile from the entrance when they came upon long rows of slabbed doors which extended on either side of the hall as far as they could see. The slabs were covered with inscriptions.

"Well, here are the Moonmen's apartments," the Professor announced. "Shall we go in?"

"But the doors appear to be sealed," Ernest remarked.

"I don't think so. I daresay the slabs are on hinges, and open from the inside. The Moonmen had to shut out the cold, you know. Let's push against this one."

"They're on hinges, all right," the Professor attested as the door yielded to their united strength. "Look out!"

The stone gave way and fell inside with a terrific thud that brought to life a thousand yowling echoes. A tomb-like odor, almost malefic, smote them.

"Just as I suspected," Burke drawled. "The Moonmen didn't have sense enough to invent hinges."

He pointed his atolight into the room. The blackness was all but solid.

"Well, we won't go in there for a while," he said. "Let's go farther down the hall—maybe we'll find an open door and the air will be less malodorous."

Such an aperture soon came into view.

"I guess we'll be safe in this one," the Professor ventured. "There's quite a draft in the hall, if you have noticed, and this room should be well ventilated by this time. Ready to go in?"

Still holding hands, they flashed their lights through the opening and stepped inside.

A square chamber, not more than forty feet across, was revealed as the light swept its walls. In one corner they discerned an object that looked like a long cot, and near it were two small benches. In the center of each wall was a passage hewn through the rock, like the entrance.

"A regular room, if it had windows," Ernest observed. "What is that protruding from the wall over there?"

"A water pipe, I'll wager," the Professor said. "Let's go over and see."

"Correct again," he certified upon examining the projection. "And look under it—there's the basin that caught the water as it trickled in from the crater." He pointed to a cup-shaped excavation in the floor. "Rather crude plumbing, but it served the purpose, no doubt. Well, let's explore the adjoining rooms."

They passed through the door to their left and found themselves in a room similar to the one behind them.

"All of the rooms seem to connect," Ernest com-

mented, noting the doors that led to still other apartments.

"Yes, 'connecting rooms but no bath,' as it were, unless they bathed in their drinking water," the Professor chuckled. "Well, what do you say about returning to the plane? There seems to be an abundance of rooms, and our heat and light can make them fairly comfortable. And the ventilation won't be such a problem, with each room opening into another. The Moonmen were not so dumb, after all."

"Wait just a minute," Mildred said as they were about to go. "There's one of those strange beds over there in the corner, and I think there are diamonds on it. I saw something flash as I turned my light there a moment ago."

"Mildred, this was the death-bed of some poor Moonwoman who must have perished in the last days, when the living were unable to bury the dead," the Professor whispered as they leaned over the dusty slab of the cot. "See, there are two armlets and two anklets, set with precious stones, lying in the dust they once adorned. Do you care to examine them?"

"I wouldn't touch them for worlds," the girl shuddered. "Let's go."

"Ernest, let's peep into the cave of He-She before we leave," the Professor pleaded when they were again in the sunlight. "It won't take but a minute or two, and I'm sure we can spare the time."

Ernest wanted to demur, but yielded to his companion's entreating tone.

"It won't take but a minute or two," Burke repeated as they prepared to enter the cave. "Are you afraid, Mildred?"

"No, Professor, I'm almost as eager as you to see what the thing looks like."

They stepped inside and found themselves facing a stone wall only a few feet from the entrance. A square door yawned in its center.

"We'll see it through," Ernest answered the Professor's questioning look.

They felt the tingle of eerie adventure as their next step took them through the opening and they flashed their lights into the inner darkness.

"There it is!" Mildred cried. "I can see its blazing eyes! Turn your lights on them!"

He-She, in all its hypnotic hideousness, leered from its throne in the deeper shadows as the light fell full on its fantastic face.

And then a thunderous thud sounded behind them. The light from the entrance went out. The door—where was it?

They were trapped!

CHAPTER XXV

He-She

STARTLED and stunned, it was some moments before the prisoners grasped the gravity of their plight.

Professor Burke's voice broke the solemn silence.

"Snared!" he fairly bellowed. "Caged like rats! Ernest, I told you that devil would get me, but I didn't think you and Mildred were to suffer. And it's all my fault—my fault. Trapped—to die like beasts! There is no hope!"

"Don't say that, Professor," Ernest put in with forced cheerfulness. "It's not so bad as that. We'll get out of here all right, won't we, Mildred?" The girl was clinging to his arm. "Let's examine the door, Professor; maybe it's only a rock that has fallen and we can push it away."

"That damned demon did it, I tell you," Burke vociferated as they turned their lights toward the erst-

while opening. "Well, what do you know about that! It's the work of fiends!"

It was no stone that barred their exit. What they saw was a ponderous metal slab wedged firmly in its enclosure.

"Look, the jambs are grooved," Ernest pointed out. "It's plain that the slab operates like a window sash, but what caused it to fall?"

"He-She alone can answer that," the Professor mumbled. "What concerns us now is what will cause it to rise." He pounded the door with his fist and gave it a lusty kick. "It's at least a foot thick and made of tempered gold. If we had a crowbar——"

"Our atorays would make short work of it, if I hadn't been so stupid as to leave them in the plane," Ernest deplored. "We should never have entered the caves without them. And I also am to blame for failing to bring a pocket radio set. My negligence is inexcusable, Professor; I feel like kicking myself."

"No, Ernest, I'm the fool—a thousand of them. It is my fault alone that we're in here—in to stay."

"Please don't give up hope so soon," Mildred spoke up. "There may be another exit. I'm sure we shall get out, somehow."

"Of course we shall escape," Ernest reassured. "Suppose we see what our prison looks like."

Turning and facing the idol, they scattered their atollight until the chamber was dimly illumined from wall to wall.

The room was square, and about thirty feet across. Its roof was high and convex, with a few narrow ventilation slits near the top. Three of its walls were roughly finished, but the one to the left of the entrance was smooth and bore many inscriptions. The floor was made of large stone blocks, closely fitted. A small bench in one corner was the only furnishing.

The prisoners gave only passing attention to these details—they found it impossible to keep their gaze off the grotesque figure of the moon god.

The uncouth form of He-She occupied a throne-like structure that rested against the center of the back wall. The monster was about twelve feet high in its sitting posture, and was made of stone and tempered gold, with many-faceted eyes of enormous diamonds, like those of its bas-relief replica on Mount Hadley. Its head, body and legs were stone, its arms gold; and in its lap, clutched between its massive knees, was a huge golden bowl above which, poised menacingly, was a great block of yellow metal gripped in its scaly hands. The arms were jointed and apparently movable.

The Thing's face was even more repulsive than that of its Mount Hadley likeness. Diabolic beyond description were its misshapen head, its hellish leer, its ghoul-ish mouth.

But fascinating as the eyes of a monster serpent were the great orbs of He-She!

In the weird glow that fell upon them they danced with a radiance at once beautiful and baneful, corruscating the primal colors in dazzling, terrible splendor.

And when the Earthians, unconsciously drawing nearer under the charm of the fetish, focused their rays on its hideous head, the brilliance was blinding.

"How terribly beautiful!" Mildred at length found voice to exclaim.

"Yes, some of those diamonds are as big as goose eggs," Professor Burke remarked prosaically.

The spell broken, Ernest proposed that they search for a possible exit.

Hopefully the quest began; hopelessly it ended. Convinced they were walled in on three sides by solid mountain and on the other by an immovable barrier, they felt the helplessness that precedes blank despair as they made their way back to the golden closure.

Standing again in front of the wedged slab, Pro-

fessor Burke turned the light on the floor at his feet. "So that's the way the trap works!" he ejaculated. "Now if we only could raise this block—but we haven't even a penknife."

"What is it, Professor?" his companions asked in eager unison.

"Well, this block rests on some kind of springs or levers—I felt them give beneath my weight—and that explains why the sash fell when we stepped inside."

"Let's see." Ernest stepped on the stone and felt it give fractionally beneath the added weight.

"Now watch it rise," the Professor said as they stepped off.

The block sprang up to its level.

"Springs," Burke confirmed. "And I suppose they are about as strong as when they trapped the last Moonman, due to the absence of moisture. Ernest, let's go over to the lettered wall and see what it has to tell us. You and Mildred can hold your lights on it while I decipher the writing."

With many an astute squint and enigmatic grunt, he studied the characters one by one, and then reviewed them before imparting his interpretation.

"It's a story that would make the priests of Moloch shed pity's tears," he began. "Of all the Satanic machinations ever evolved in the name of religion, this is probably the most diabolic. It is difficult to conceive of a more execrable creed, except the earthly doctrine of eternal torture."

"As I have said, He-She was the god—or devil—of sacrifice. The belief that the gods love blood seems to have prevailed here as it did in nearly all primitive religions of Earth. Well, He-She must have had its fill."

"I believe it was Roosevelt who said that only those are fit to live who do not fear to die. It seems that the Lunarians reversed this axiom."

"It is incredible, but the inscriptions say that the Moonmen sacrificed half of their numbers to their god, generation after generation."

"The monster in this cave was only one of many such idols. There was at least one in every sub-montane settlement, and before the Moonmen became cave-dwellers, they housed them in temples on the plains."

"They held that death was desirable above all things, in that it led to eternal rapture. They were taught to pray for death, not life. This belief would have led to universal extermination but for a priestly pronouncement against suicide which branded it as the supreme cowardice, and cowardice was the unpardonable sin. The memory of every suicide was anathematized, and the fact that the Lunarians were devout ancestor worshippers almost wholly restrained self-murder. Many of these inscriptions are denunciatory of the *felo-de-se*, but it seems that the suicide was not barred from the joys of the after-life because of his act."

"The sacrificial phase of their religion was based on a perverted conception of vicariousness. They believed that the virtues of those who gave their lives to their god were transferred to the living. They regarded the victims of He-She as sacrifices, yet abhorred their memory. Their praise was reserved for the beneficiaries of the immolations."

"Upon reaching the marriageable age the sexes were paired apart and cast into the cave of He-She—two youths one time, two maidens another. One must die that the other might live. The survivors were regarded as having proved, through their victory over the suicidal urge, their worthiness to perpetuate the race, and at the same time to have received the perfections, and none of the weaknesses, of the deceased. This shows that the Moonmen's metaphysical reasoning was about as abstruse as the earthly brand of only a few decades ago."

"Those who embraced the death that dwelt in the lap

of He-She were pounded to a pulp by the great pestle in the idol's hands. The superstitious masses actually believed that the fetish was alive. It was the creation of a fiendish mechanical ingenuity which seems to have been peculiar to the priestcraft."

"The writings do not explain the mechanism of the monster, but I think I can describe it. It is probable that the bottom of the bowl, or mortar into which the unfortunates climbed was adjustable, and that pressure on it released a sort of mainspring connected with the idol's arms, causing them to churn the pestle violently, and that another arrangement, operated in turn by the pestle's motion, turned a rod that ran under the floor to the trapdoor where it released a catch and caused the sash to rise. Thus the death of one prisoner provided escape for the other. And the priests then reset the trap."

"The Lunarians fashioned the eyes of He-She out of their largest diamonds—diamonds many times the size of any ever seen on Earth. The flashing orbs were supposed to hypnotize as well as terrify."

"Well, that's the story of He-She. It means that two of us may escape through the immolation of the other."

He paused, and when he spoke again his voice was vibrant with emotion:

"The long night will soon be here, and even these thick walls cannot forfend us against the killing cold. I am ready to make the sacrifice, to gladly die the death while there yet is time for you to reach the plain before the darkness comes."

Before his dazed companions could cry their protest, another voice was heard. A prolonged moan and then a swelling threnody; a blasphemous ululation and then a horripilating hissing; a gloating, ghoulisn shriek . . . and then a dirge of death.

The sinister sounds were coming from the murderous mouth of He-She!

CHAPTER XXVI

Sacrifice

EXPERIENCING cold fear for the first time in her life, Mildred screamed and grasped Ernest's arm.

Ernest himself was aghast, and involuntarily recoiled. Professor Burke, though visibly startled, intrepidly stood his ground and finally waxed pugnacious.

"Wail on and do your worst!" he defied, shaking his fist at the screaming god whose snarl all but drowned his shout. "Do you think we are children, to be frightened by mere sounds?"

As if in answer to his challenge, He-She uttered a shriek at once derisive and truculent.

"Ah, I have it!" the Professor exclaimed. "Just as I suspected!" He cupped an ear.

"I should have guessed it at first," he laughed, turning to his companions. "It's nothing but the wind. An old trick—the Egyptians employed it in a similar way. The lunar high priests knew something about acoustics, it seems. They ran pipes from the outside to the demon's throat. They're not visible, of course—probably run under the floor and up through the idol's body. The wind is rising outside, and that explains the noise."

"My, what a scare!" Mildred sighed. "It's hard to believe the thing isn't alive."

"Professor, I didn't believe the Moonmen were so clever," Ernest remarked.

"And neither did I, until we entered this infernal place. It was a devilish ingenuity, and, as I have said, was probably the exclusive property of the priestcraft. They had to perform their miracles, you know. Listen to that wail—there must be quite a storm. How long have we been in here, Ernest?"

"Nearly three hours."

"And how close is Earth?"

"About forty-five thousand miles, I should say."

"Well, that means about twenty-four hours of night ahead of us—and it's dark as night now in here. With the bodies separated by forty thousand miles—I figured it out on the way from Tycho—the time from each new moon to the next would be about 1,883 days, and the length of the moon's day and night combined would be equal to the interval from new moon to new moon. We can't hope to survive the night without fire. It means the death of all of us unless the fetish is placated. And that's what I'm going to do—you mustn't stop me, Ernest. You and Mildred must hurry to the plane."

"My God, Professor, you can't mean it!" Ernest cried. "You don't know what you're saying!"

"Please, please don't say that again," Mildred pleaded in horror. "You mustn't think of doing that. I'm sure all of us shall get out alive, but I'd rather we perish together than for you to go that way. There is always hope, and who knows but that our friends from Tycho are already outside, looking for us."

"There is no hope," their companion despaired, avoiding the girl's frightened gaze. "There is but one way—a sacrifice. He-She beckons, and I—"

"I say you shall not," Ernest burst out peremptorily. "I shall overpower you if you attempt it. I would gladly die myself, Professor, to save you and Mildred. That such a sacrifice would cause the door to rise is largely conjecture. Is it not likely that the mechanism would fail to respond after so long a time? And don't you realize that the shock of your sacrifice might kill Mildred?"

His voice softened as he continued: "You are not yourself just now, old pal. Let's wait and try to find some other way. Something tells me everything will come out all right."

Professor Burke laid his hand on Ernest's shoulder and spoke in a fatherly tone: "Perhaps I have given up hope too soon, my boy. Perhaps the feeling that I must die to save you two is but a vagary of a man who is growing old. But I feel that I'm to blame for your being here, and I would die a thousand deaths to undo my folly. I can't help looking the facts in the face, Ernest. It's already getting chilly in here, and we cannot hope to live through the night. And it would probably be eternal night for us, even if we survived the cold. I see little hope that the people from Tycho will find us. We have no food, no water. I cannot let you and Mildred suffer. But we shall again try to find a way out. If we could find anything to burn we might—"

"Oh, Professor!" Mildred cried excitedly. "I'm sure I saw a black seam somewhere in here that looked like coal. It's near the idol, I think."

Feverishly they began the search, hoping against hope. First they scanned the wall to the left of the god. Stratum of gold here and there—only mocking gold. Silently, tensely, their hearts beating a tat-too they could hear above the abated hissing of He-She, they moved on to the other side of the idol and resumed their quest.

"Here it is! Here it is!" Mildred exclaimed, flashing her light on a dark streak near the bottom of the wall.

Professor Burke dropped to his knees for a closer scrutiny. About a foot of the seam showed above the floor for some three yards. He passed his hand over its smooth surface and then scratched it with his nails, collecting a pinch of dust in his palm.

"It looks like coal, but we mustn't rejoice too soon," he said, after a minute that seemed an eternity. "Wait until we get some of it out and see if it will burn. Confound it, Ernest, I guess we'll have to dig it out with our hands."

"I've got it!" the younger man flashed after a perplexed moment. "We'll wrest a leg from the bench in the corner and use it as a pry."

The supports of the bench proved to be made of tem-

pered gold, and after much twisting and pulling, they removed one of them.

It took them but a brief space to loosen several lumps of the soft mineral. And then they stood staring at it blankly . . . Fuel, but no way to kindle it!

In vain the two men searched their pockets for paper; futilely they struck match after match and held them to the finer particles. The stuff glowed, but would not flame.

Ernest rose suddenly and doffed his coat.

"I'm going to use it for kindling," he explained. "Shed yours, too, Professor. Perhaps they'll burn enough to light the smaller lumps. It's certainly worth trying."

"I'll contribute my hat!" Mildred fluttered. It's flimsy enough to burn readily."

"Well, we'll light it first," Ernest accepted, and proceeded to make the attempt. "Hold up the coats, Professor, and I'll use the hat as a flare."

Joyfully they beheld the spurt of flame cling to the woolen garments. Ernest then took the coats, laid them on the floor and put several small lumps of the mineral on top.

In excruciating suspense they watched the flames dally with the bits of black. And when the lumps at last began to blaze, it seemed they were witnessing the miracle of fire for the first time.

"It's bituminous," the Professor rejoiced as Ernest consigned larger chunks to the fire. "The inscriptions on Mount Hadley said something about the Moonmen getting their fuel from the mountains, but I had no idea it was real coal."

They seated themselves close to the blaze and reveled in its genial warmth. Compared with their staid heaters, an open fire suddenly seemed a wonderful thing.

They grew reminiscent under the spell of the glowing embers and talked of many things. They agreed that their life on Earth now seemed a separate existence, a sort of vivid dream. Their present state was even more unreal. Had they dreamed the flight through space, or were they dreaming now?

At length they became aware that He-She had ceased its dissonance. Thirst and incipient hunger reminded them they had been in the cave several hours. The feeble light from the rifts in the roof was no longer visible, and they knew that it was night.

The realization caused Professor Burke to relapse into despondency. For several minutes he sat smoking his pipe in silence, staring dejectedly into the coals, his face funereal as the surrounding gloom.

And when he raised his head and spoke his voice was heavy with hopelessness.

"We have cheated the cold only to perish more miserably. And I could have saved both of you by giving my worthless life."

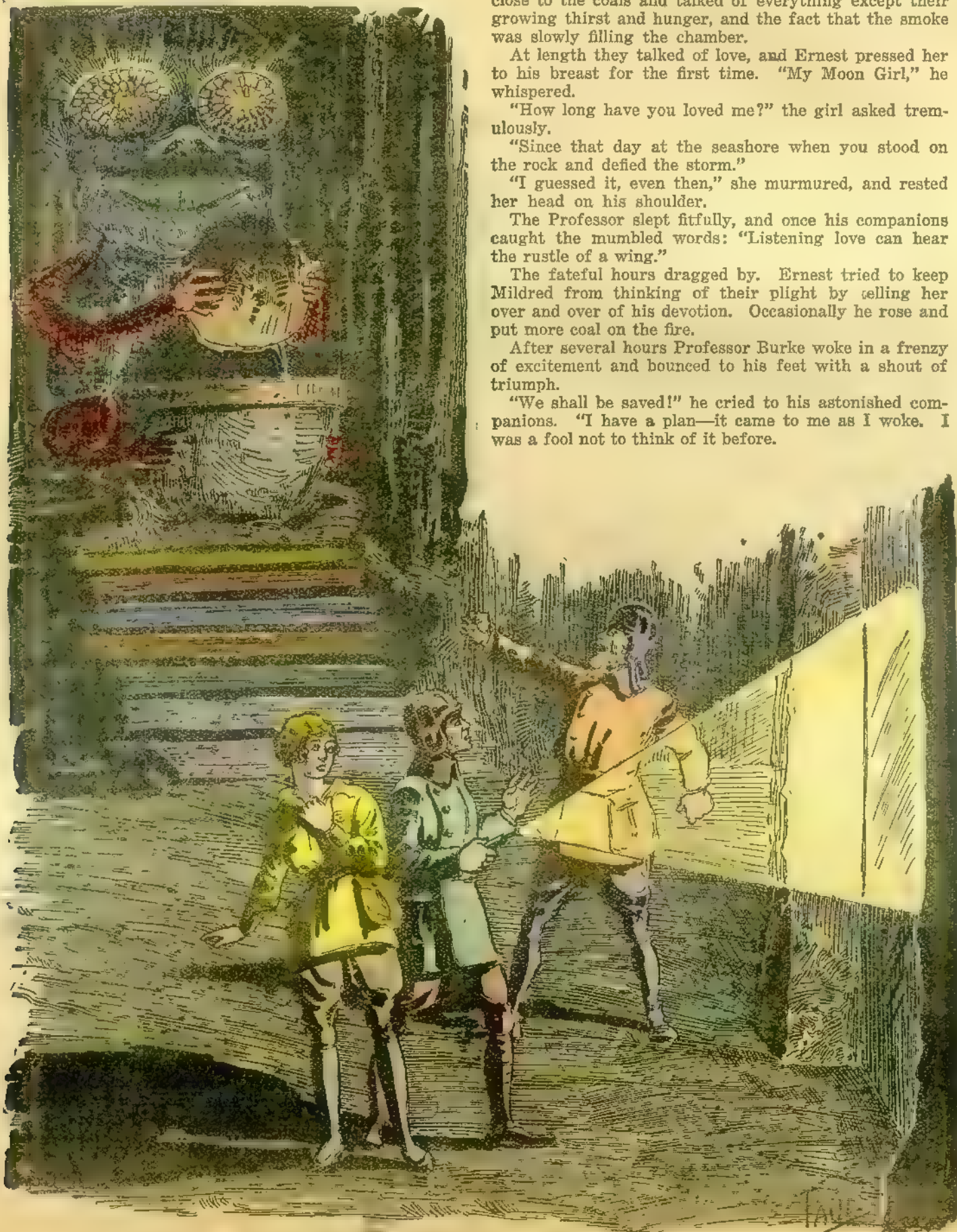
"Life," he continued with a philosophical turn, "what is it, after all? I often recall Robert Ingersoll's deathless words:

'Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We call aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word, but in the night of death, hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing.'

"Love. I know it seems incongruous for me to even speak the word. The world has always regarded me as a cold, selfish old misanthrope incapable of sentiment. But I am now face to face with love. It is of your love for each other that I speak. I guessed your secret—if secret it is—long ago. And since we have been together I have come to love both of you as though you were my own children. You have filled a great void in my life."

His voice broke, and there was infinite sadness in it when he resumed:

"Something—call it anything you wish—tells me I shall never leave this cave alive, but I fancy I can see you two going down the years hand in hand, back on Earth."



"Oh, Professor!" Mildred cried. "You mustn't talk of leaving us. We will find some way to escape, and you shall return to Earth with us."

"Maybe so, maybe so," he soothed. "Now I am going to lie down by the fire and seek the oblivion of sleep."

The long night wore on. Ernest and Mildred sat close to the coals and talked of everything except their growing thirst and hunger, and the fact that the smoke was slowly filling the chamber.

At length they talked of love, and Ernest pressed her to his breast for the first time. "My Moon Girl," he whispered.

"How long have you loved me?" the girl asked tremulously.

"Since that day at the seashore when you stood on the rock and defied the storm."

"I guessed it, even then," she murmured, and rested her head on his shoulder.

The Professor slept fitfully, and once his companions caught the mumbled words: "Listening love can hear the rustle of a wing."

The fateful hours dragged by. Ernest tried to keep Mildred from thinking of their plight by telling her over and over of his devotion. Occasionally he rose and put more coal on the fire.

After several hours Professor Burke woke in a frenzy of excitement and bounced to his feet with a shout of triumph.

"We shall be saved!" he cried to his astonished companions. "I have a plan—it came to me as I woke. I was a fool not to think of it before."

"That damned demon did it, I tell you," Burke vociferated, as they turned their lights toward the erstwhile opening.

"Listen!" he continued before the pair could find speech. "Our friends from Tycho will start out to look for us as soon as it is light. Our plane, parked out there in the open, can be seen for miles, and they are certain to find it. Then they'll begin to search the caves for us. The entrance to the home of He-She will attract them as it did us. But how are we to signal them? There is but one way, and I have found it. As soon as morning comes we will take the bench leg and begin beating on the door incessantly until they hear us. Their atorays will then get us out in a jiffy."

"The night is about twelve hours old—half gone. We can see it through without much suffering. Now you children go to sleep and forget your troubles. You were right, Mildred—I shall live to laugh at the monster and return to Earth with you!"

Ernest felt that his friend's elation lacked sincerity, but recognized the plan as their only hope and wondered why he had not thought of it.

"Mildred told you we would find a way, Professor," he enthused, and turned to the girl whose eyes were sparkling with joy. "The Professor bids us sleep. Shall we obey?"

"I was never more awake, and I'm not so thirsty," Mildred replied. "I want to stay up as long as I can."

So the three of them sat down again and talked of many things—but not of the smoke that was slowly but surely filling the chamber.

THE long night wore on. They talked until thirst parched their tongues and the smoke became almost unbearable. And then they sat staring vacantly into the fire, thinking thoughts they dared not utter. . . . And the dreadful night wore on.

"We must lie down with our faces to the floor," Ernest gasped when the smoke began to stifle. "We'll breathe easier there."

The Professor's labored breathing soon became slumberous, but to Ernest and Mildred, lying with their faces pressed close to the rough floor, sleep beckoned but to mock. The girl's wan face revealed her silent suffering. "My brave little girl," Ernest managed to whisper huskily, and drew her to him until their lips met in a pathetic kiss.

The spectral hours flagged by until the dark awaited dawn. Professor Burke slept on, despite his gasping and coughing. The smoke was becoming so dense that Ernest hesitated to replenish the fire, but when he let it die down for a brief space, numbness soon began. He knew that Mildred's suffering must be greater than his, and wanted to cry out in his impotence, marveling the while at the girl's transcendent fortitude.

After what seemed another eternity, Professor Burke aroused, apparently alert, and in parched whispers again implored his companions to seek respite in slumber, assuring them he would stay awake and tend the fire.

"I'll wake you when the folks from Tycho come," he cheered. "I predict they'll be here within two hours after sunrise."

At length Ernest and Mildred felt themselves sinking into merciful insensibility.

They were awakened by a terrific, ominous clangor, a metallic squeaking and pounding. They sat up painfully and rubbed their eyes. Consciousness brought cognition of the horrible truth: *the Professor was missing and the noise was coming from He-She!*

And then they became aware that a great shaft of light was contending with the thinning clouds of smoke. The door was open, and it was day!

Side by side they crept and crawled to the opening, and on into the blinding sunlight.

After a few undiscerning minutes they descried the

glittering hull of *The Pioneer*, and then, dim in the far distance, a row of moving specks.

It was the aerocade from Tycho!

CHAPTER XXVII

The Lunar Necropolis

ONCE more the cave city of the Dorfels was peopled. After five thousand silent centuries its corridors and chambers again rang with life, albeit the sounds were alien.

A day and a night has passed since Ernest and Mildred's escape from the trap of the He-She. They were almost fully recovered physically, but their mental ordeal had left marks which they knew would never heal entirely. They felt that they had aged, and beheld in each other's eyes shadows that should not have been.

Nightmares, with He-She the incubus, disturbed their sleep, and they feared that the pounding of the monster's murderous pestle would reverberate forever in their ears.

Captain Ellington, in relating what had taken place at Tycho after his last communication with *The Pioneer*, told of the camp's anxiety and consternation when the hours passed without further message. When the eclipse was over they had signaled several other planes, all of which arrived before sunset. Alarmed by the continued silence of Sherard's ship, they had made every effort to signal the craft, and throughout the night, which they survived by keeping the atoheat at maximum, the radios were kept busy. And then, with the first rays of the morning, the aerocade had set out for the Dorfels, failing to find the caves until the greater part of the range had been covered.

"At last we saw the plain, and the glistening wings of *The Pioneer*," Ellington related, "and when we found you, you were more dead than alive, and so blackened by smoke you were hardly recognizable."

Twenty-three planes and two atoliners, *The Crescent City* and *The Pinzona*, had composed the squadron from Tycho, and on the morning following their arrival two more ships were guided to the caves by signals.

The signaling had been continued day and night, but without further response, and Ernest was at last convinced that the two hundred and seventy-five people in the cave community were the only Earthians to have reached the moon. The realization stunned him. He had hoped there would be many thousands.

A row of caves to the right of He-She's dungeon had been selected as the dwelling of Earth's last handful. Atoheat and atolight, and the furnishings from the planes, made the caverns quite habitable save for the scarcity of water. The small pool that shimmered in the depths of Bailey's distant pit was rapidly disappearing under the sun's strong rays, and what was left of it was being brought to the caves by assigned planes, stored in every kind of receptacle obtainable, and then boiled and filtered.

Upon reaching the caves the Earthians had established a sort of community government with President Carmonne of France at its head. When Ernest was sufficiently recovered, however, full authority had been vested in him despite his reluctance.

There was little for him to do. The community was largely self-governing, and its heterogeneous population, representing nearly every race, had quickly merged into a helpful, democratic whole.

One of Ernest's first acts was to have the remains of Professor Burke removed from the mortar and interred in front of the cave of sacrifice, and around the grave Mildred had planted some of the seeds she had found in his belongings. On the rough slab which marked his friend's strange resting place, Ernest saw to the carving of these words: "The spot where man has died for man is holy ground"—a quotation from Ingersoll, whose

works, along with those of Schopenhauer, Mildred had also found in his bunk.

He-She would never wreak again. The mechanism that operated the trap and the idol's arms had been wrecked and the door of the cave removed. The inside of the golden slab bore mute testimony of Professor Burke's last efforts to signal rescue. It was covered near the bottom with countless nicks where, lying on the floor of the smoky chamber, he had sounded his futile tat-too. The bench leg, its ends battered, was found where he had dropped it when, abandoning all hope, he had made his sacrificial decision. The dust on the floor showed where he had crawled to the idol's feet, to climb into the bowl of death.

The Earthfolk had found it impossible to adjust themselves to the lunar schedule of light and darkness, so they were living by their own timepieces, dividing the day and night into twelve-hour periods as nearly as possible, and eating and sleeping and going about their affairs regardless of moontime except for their confinement to the caves during the "day" part of the night, and where the stupendous Earth shut off the light of the sun. Each day the moon was shrouded in ecliptic gloom for more than four hours.

During the early part of the nights, which were getting warmer as the moon retained more of the sun's heat, the Earthians did little but gaze upon the monstrous mother globe whose green expanse, all but monopolizing the heavens, flooded the satellite with emerald brilliance. Terra was now "the moon's moon"—Terra the terrible, threatening to destroy the daughter sphere she had driven away at birth, and whose revengeful return was now imperiling her own existence.

During the long periods of sunlight the men, accompanied by some of the more adventurous women, made many exploration trips into the caves and mountains. The nearest mountains were visited first, and yielded much new knowledge concerning the vanished Lunarians. Various kinds of furnishings—all made of tempered gold—were found, and many other golden objects, such as basins, urns and the like, not to mention bracelets, anklets and other jeweled adornments.

The caves fairly reeked with gold. Great veins of it were visible in nearly every wall, and the deeper the explorers penetrated, the more they found.

Ernest himself led the exploration of He-She's treasure trove, and true to Professor Burke's prediction, it contained "loads" of precious stones; but contrary to his prophecy, the Earthians did not fight for possession of the gems, nor try to mine the gold.

The stones were sealed in vaults which had to be opened with atorays. There were four vaults of diamonds, two of pearls, and two of a strange red-green stone that seemed a mating of ruby and emerald. Some of the diamonds, all of which were cut, weighed more than a thousand carats. The pearls also were the largest and most perfect the Earthians had ever seen.

Ernest wondered where the Moonmen had procured the pearls. The giant bivalves that produced them must have had their being in some sea, he reasoned, and there had never been a lunar sea, unless the legend that Professor Burke had found on Mount Hadley, of an ocean that once existed on the other side of the moon, was more than fable.

Diamonds and pearls meant no more than polished pebbles now, but still were things of beauty, so Ernest divided the contents of the vaults equally among the people. Next day he saw some of the children playing marbles with the pearls.

Another expedition, led jointly by Ellington and Harveston, succeeded in reaching the lunar catacombs, and there, more than half a mile from the mouth of the winding tunnel, their atorays revealed a city of ten thousand tombs.

A vast cavern, circular and at least two hundred yards in diameter, formed the lunar necropolis. The wall of the slightly arched chamber was about twenty-five feet high and regularly studded, row on row, with round seals of gold fitted flat with the surface so close together that they almost touched. There were fourteen full tiers of them, and another, at the top, extended almost half round.

Removing one of the plates with their atorays, the explorers found a cylindrical cavity about three feet wide that penetrated horizontally into the hard rock a distance of about twelve feet.

A handful of dust was all that remained of the strange creature whose tomb the cylinder had been—a handful of dust in which reposed a few tarnished ornaments.

After a score of seals had been removed in the hope of finding a mummified Moonman, the explorers, convinced the quest was futile, turned their attention to a circular elevation in the center of the chamber. It proved to be a flat-topped structure some seven feet high and twelve across, with steps all round, and Harveston and Ellington guessed that it was a sort of dais where the lunar priests had performed their funeral functions.

Then, beginning to feel the effects of the musty, insufficient air, the party left the gold-studded place of the dead.

It was raining when they emerged from the tunnel half an hour later—raining so hard that the Earthfolk had taken to the caves. A blinding flash of lightning greeted Harveston and Ellington as they reached the mouth of the passage, but this did not deter them from hurrying to Ernest's quarters to report their discovery. They found him and Mildred standing near the door of their cave, the girl exulting in the storm.

Next morning Ernest called the people together and addressed them:

"Another Great Change faces us, and no one can foretell what it will bring," he began.

"The earth is less than thirty-one thousand miles way, and the stage of critical proximity is very near. The moon may stop when it has gone a few hundred more miles, or it may not pause until it is within twenty-five thousand miles of the planet. And we are not sure it will stop at all.

"But when it has gone a few thousand more miles, at the most, and the attraction of the earth is counterbalanced by the push of the tides, one of three things must take place: the moon will pause for a brief period and then recede rather rapidly, or go back at a snail's pace, or fall to Earth like a plummet.

"I believe, however, that a quick recession will occur. This is in accordance with the Bartonian theory, which is that the satellite, after being flung from its molten mother, receded at a rate of several thousand miles a day, its speed gradually diminishing as the tidal force decreased until, when it had gone approximately 150,000 miles, it all but came to a stop, and required millions of years to attain the distance it had prior to The Great Change. It would seem, of course, that its early recession would not be more rapid than the latter stage of its advance, but when the tension of its pausing period is broken the tidal reaction will probably cause it to *spring* away for the first few thousand miles.

"As I said in suggesting the migration to the moon, the earth would be habitable with the moon no nearer than 150,000 miles. But could we survive the moon's return to its old orbit? And would we ever be able to return to Earth? These questions are unanswerable. It is possible, however, that the satellite would retain some of the planet's atmosphere for a while, and that the air path between the two bodies, though much thinner than at present, would be dense enough to support our atoplanes operating under full power. And it is possible that we could set sail for Earth before the moon reached the 150,000 mile point.

"If the Bartonian theory does not hold, it will take the sphere centuries to recede a thousand miles, in which event Earth's rotation and frigid temperature would render it uninhabitable for eons.

"There is a possibility, of course, that neither of these things will occur. It may be true, as Professor Burke feared, that the moon will crash into the planet. But I am confident it will stop. The earth is so near that we can see, without the telescope, that its surface is a broken, moving mass. This means that the globe's fearful rotation has kept the ice from becoming a solid crust. The world is wrapped in a polar sea whose colossal icebergs churn everywhere as mountainous waves, lashed to fury, leap toward the tormenting moon. But for the tides, the moon long since would have crashed into the earth. As it is, I believe they are powerful enough, with the atomic attraction nearly if not entirely dissipated, to stop the satellite and send it back into space.

"And when the moon falters, hard pressed by contending forces, its greatest tribulation will begin. It is then that Earth will have her revenge. The push and pull will shake the smaller sphere to its very core. And at last, when the breaking point comes and the moon is cast back for a few thousand miles, its convulsions will all but wreck it.

"The moonquake will be of indeterminable duration, and it is then that our fate will hang in the balance. The severity of the shocks will about dislodge the mountains, and it is almost certain that the undermined parts of the ranges will cave in.

"The moon is now moving earthward at a rate of less than two hundred miles in twenty-four hours, having slowed down so greatly in the last week that the nights are almost as short and pleasant as they were on Earth. But the moonquake may begin at any time. I do not believe, however, that it will commence until the moon has gone about five thousand more miles. Nonetheless, we can trust no longer the safety of the caves. Beginning tonight, we must park our atoplanes at the doors and be ready to seek refuge in them when the first tremors come, to remain in them until the worst is over.

"Professor Pickering and other noted lunarians believed that the moon might revolve on its axis if it were only a short distance from the earth, and so did I. But such has not occurred, and I believe Luna will continue to show the same face to Earth, regardless of what might happen, unless she actually crashes into the planet.

"That is all I can tell you. And now, with your consent, Mildred and I shall start on an adventure that has lured us ever since we came here. We want to make a hurried trip to the other side of the moon before the change occurs. We expect to return before night, but I shall place President Carmonne in charge of the camp during my absence. I think we shall find the bed of a great ocean on the other side."

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Other Side of the Moon

THROUGH an eerie twilight that was neither dawn nor dusk *The Pioneer* sailed on. The camp of the Earth-folk lay in the fierce sunlight hundreds of miles behind. Ahead, only ominous shadows and the portentous unknown.

A feeling that was akin to fear chilled Mildred as the ship's wings cleaved the gloom. It seemed to her that they were entering the dread abode of an incorporeal Something far more malignant than He-She—a sinister Something that might, she mused, be Luna's very soul. For the moment she thought of suggesting that they return to the caves. But just then Ernest called to her excitedly and pointing ahead, his face advertising utter amazement

High in the darksome distance, probably not more than fifty miles, a long, irregular line of brilliance flashed against an ebon background.

"What is it?" the girl cried.

"I can't imagine, unless it's an electrical phenomenon similar to our northern lights. Uncanny, isn't it? Look, it's as steady as reflected sunlight—and maybe that's what it is. But what could be reflecting it?"

The serrate streak of light seemed to ascend as *The Pioneer* advanced. This, Ernest reasoned, was because he was flying low and level. And then, when the phenomenon seemed almost directly above them, parts of it began to fade out, leaving a row of flashing dots and curves.

Mildred cried out in wonder and in the same instant Ernest slowed the motors and started the helicopter. A minute later the atoplane was faltering and hovering like a bewildered bird.

The resplendence above them was sunlight playing on the peaks of lofty mountains!

"They must rise abruptly," Ernest said after he had brought the machine to poise. "It's a range not recorded on our lunar maps. They could not be seen from Earth because this part of the moon was always in shadow. It means we are beyond the lunar south pole, and on the threshold of the other side."

"How near are the mountains?" The girl's voice was instinct with excitement.

"Probably not more than ten miles, and they must be about fifteen thousand feet high, and the summits, at least, are white. The breaking up of the light—see, there's not much of it left now—is due to the sinking of the sun. We had better rise before all the light is gone. I suppose we can rely on our searchlights to avoid a crash, but I don't care to take a chance with those mountains until I learn their height and how they rise."

"But won't it be too dark for us to explore the other side?"

"Not much darker than it is here, but darker than I expected. The sun is still high a few hundred miles behind us, you know, and due to the air scattering the light it won't be so very dark beyond the mountains—unless we go too far. I don't intend to do much exploring—only to satisfy myself about that lunar sea, and I have an idea we'll find it just on the other side. We probably shall be returning within two hours. I don't think we need fear about what we'll find on the other side. Still, there is some danger—the unknown is never safe. Should anything happen to our plane, it is possible we might never return. Perhaps we should go no farther, Mildred. I'm not afraid, but I am thinking of you. There's no need to run the risk. We've already experienced enough suffering at the hands of the moon, and I would be a brute to carry you into further peril. Suppose we let the other side alone. Come, let us return to the caves. I insist."

The girl knew he spoke sincerely, but only for her sake. Alone, he would have dared mountains twice as high and skies as dark again. She could be as brave as he.

"I wouldn't think of returning," she replied. "I am quite unafraid, and really eager to go on. If it is too ugly we needn't land. Let's hurry before all the light is gone from the peaks."

Ernest applied nearly all of *The Pioneer's* energy to the helicopter and the big plane shot up like a balloon, quivering to the strain. At fifteen thousand feet, the glow on the peaks was still above them. Half a mile higher, and the few remaining flashes were under them, apparently about ten miles away. Ernest then stopped the helicopter and steered straight ahead. Of the rest of the mountains, nothing was visible until the plane was within two miles of the light. Then, through the dusk, they discerned enough of the mighty range to know that

it rose almost perpendicular, and that the tops alone appeared to be whitish stone, probably marble. It seemed that nature had tried to erect an insurmountable wall to hide the moon's black back.

The last light on the peaks went out just as they passed over, but more gaunt ridges were faintly visible through the gloom. Ernest descended a few hundred feet to get a better view of them, holding the plane to its slowest pace and turning the searchlights full ahead.

They had gone not more than twenty miles when the mountains disappeared suddenly from under them. The range evidently ended as abruptly as it began.

"The other side of the moon!" Ernest rejoiced. "And where shall we go now? I think I'll go on for a little while and find a landing place. Perhaps——"

A hissing, sputtering sound came from the motors. The plane lurched downward so suddenly that Ernest almost lost control of it.

"It's nothing serious, little girl," he assured his startled companion. "Just an oil leak. I think I can repair it in a few minutes after we land. We'll glide down."

After many spirals, which should have brought it to land, *The Pioneer* kept descending. The altimeter showed Ernest he was below sea level.

"We're over the bed of the lunar ocean," he remarked.

A few more spirals, and the searchlights brought the bottom of the great basin to view. *The Pioneer* careened to a stop on a bed of pebbles and sand.

"Well, our tour of exploration is over," Ernest said. "We must return as soon as I repair the plane. It's much darker here than I anticipated. But come, let's get outside for a bit, so we can say we've stood on the floor of the lunar sea. We'll pocket a few pebbles as proof."

Keeping in the path of the searchlights, they strayed only a short distance, picked up a handful of the smaller rocks, and were about to return when Mildred gave a cry of discovery and held up her find for inspection.

It was the shell of a huge bivalve, nearly as large again as any they had ever seen.

"Now we know where the Moonmen got their pearls," Ernest commented, "but how did they get across the mountains? How Professor Burke would have enjoyed solving that mystery. And I guess he would have wanted to set out at once and find the beds of the rivers that fed the sea. There were no big streams on the exposed side, you know, so all of the rivers must have had their sources on the hidden half. Come, let us return to the ship. I think I can repair the leak from the inside."

The trouble proved more serious than Ernest thought. The motors were almost drowned in oil.

After three hours the job still baffled him. It was getting quite dark, and Mildred, watching the stars, was astonished to see those near the horizon blotted out rather suddenly. Clouds were gathering.

Within another hour the entire sky was overcast, and then came inordinate flashes of lightning that revealed miles of the surrounding basin and silhouetted the nearby mountains. The boom of the thunder was ear-splitting.

Ernest finished soldering the leak just as the storm broke.

"I hope it doesn't last long," he said. "The sun will soon be down on the other side, and unless we get back over the mountains by then, we'll have to stay until it rises again."

But the storm lingered, growing in fury. The down-pour was as heavy as any they had seen on Earth. And when the elements ceased their frenzy and the stars came out again—came out in splendor far more gorgeous than the Earth pair had seen since their trip through space—it was night, and darkness, Cimmerian darkness, fell upon them like a suffocating blanket.

Ernest switched off the searchlights and turned on all the interior illumination. The radio soon had them in touch with Captain Ellington's ship, and Ernest apprised

the operator of what had occurred. "Tell Ellington we are in no danger and will be back in camp in a few hours after daybreak."

Communication with the camp was established at intervals during the early hours of the night, and Professor Burke's books also helped to while away the time until Mildred fell asleep, her head on Ernest's shoulder.

CHAPTER XXIX

Back to Earth

IT must have been near midnight when the moonquake began.

The great paroxysm came without warning. The sphere reeled as from a staggering blow. Reverberations, sepulchral and oppressive, cluttered the air. The moon jumped and jerked, curveting and convulsed until its epilepsy seemed a dance of death. The Earth pair felt *The Pioneer* slip and slide, and knew that the surface was shifting.

On into the night the upheaval continued with increasing intensity. Ernest knew that the moon was being shaken to its very center, and doubted whether it could survive the torture. The din of the havoc became deafening, overwhelming. A staccato ululation rose above the rumbling. Terra was having her revenge, and Luna was howling her terrible agony and hate.

The major struggle ended as abruptly as it began. A shock that racked the satellite to the verge of destruction was the finale.

It was over, but the vanquished orb kept quivering. Ernest, looking at the stars, saw them scurry across the sable sky, and knew that the moon was being shot back into space.

He immediately tried to signal the camp, and tried again and again. Silence. He feared the worst.

Soon as the murky morning broke over the vanished sea, *The Pioneer* was off. The mountains were crossed without difficulty. Some of their peaks, as seen through the gloom, appeared to have toppled. And a few minutes later, when the plane burst into the sunlight, the marred moon lay revealed.

What had been a plain was now an anomalous waste. The surface was cracked, warped, sunken, bloated. Huge rocks protruded here and there. Some of the fissures were abysmal.

The last vestige of hope for the survival of their comrades perished as soon as the Dorfels came into view. The great range was utterly ravaged and all but overthrown. From a distance it was seen that hundreds of peaks had cracked and crashed, and when *The Pioneer* passed over the devastation, thousands of prodigious fissures yawned hungrily. Here and there appeared great sinks, as if the mountains had been mere *papier-mache* mounds trod on by Gog and Magog.

And when *The Pioneer* landed, not a trace of the cave city could be seen. Millions of tons of rock had avalanched from the troubled heights and snuffed out all. Ernest believed that the destruction came with the moon's first spasm, and that the planes, at the doors of the caves, had been buried before Earth's last lot, hurrying from their collapsing cells, could reach them.

Infinite loneliness and sadness engulfed the man and girl. Realization that they were Earth's last pair stunned them, left them dazed.

When, after many minutes, Ernest spoke, his voice was hollow. "Alone in a universe of death," he said. "Perhaps it were better we had perished, too."

And, during the nightmare days that followed, while they were waiting for the regressing moon to undo some of the damage on the planet, that they might venture to return, they fancied more than once that they had died in truth, and now were phantoms on a spectral sphere. Occasionally Ernest would point his telescope at the earth,

and once Mildred visited the garden she had planted near the Professor's grave, and found green things growing. The grave itself was buried under the slide of rock, as was the nearby house of He-She.

* * * * *

ONE man and one woman—Terra's final twain—struggling through space on a treacherous thread of air. Behind them a mobile moon, tremulous in retreat. Before them, a weary world, seen as a glacial globe. Around them, flashing through the embracing ether, the exquisite sublimity of the spheres.

The air was so tenuous that *The Pioneer* could scarcely hold its course. With all motors going at top speed, it could not make more than four hundred miles an hour. Once a small "pocket" was encountered and the plane fell hundreds of feet.

The telescope revealed that Earth's ice-shroud was breaking up rapidly, and when they had gone about half the distance, land began to appear. The air was becoming denser.

When they were within five thousand miles of the planet, some of its surface alterations were disclosed. It was impossible to identify the continents, much of which could now be seen. There was land where water should have been, and seas where land.

And when the continents became more clearly outlined, they were utterly alien to those with which the Earth pair was familiar. Great ice ridges appeared on most of them, near the equatorial line, and extended far to sea. The Americas could be discerned, but seemed to have shrunk greatly, and the isthmus region was a zone of ice. With the exception of Australia, which was readily recognized, they could not be sure of the other continents. Much of what they took to be Europe had disappeared in the sea or under an ice sheet which covered the southern part. Much of Asia, including all its island fringe, likewise was gone. The northern half of Africa was hidden entirely by an ice cap, and part of its southern coast had been washed away. Small islands had been born in every sea.

The turning of the globe bared another astounding change: *the poles were no longer icebound!* Land hidden since some previous glacial age lay naked, and there was much more of it near each pole than geologists had believed. There were still some glaciers on it, however,

and thousands of great icebergs in the surrounding seas.

The truth dawned suddenly on Ernest—the *tortured earth had shifted on its axis!*

The Pioneer was now descending rapidly, bringing other changes into view. It was seen that all the mountain ranges had been worn down, some of the smaller chains having virtually disappeared. There were many new rivers, and some of the old ones were blotted out. Dark blotches here and there in the interior of the continents probably were the remains of cities.

Ernest brought his ship to rest on the coast of a continent which he believed to be Greenland.

A few minutes later the man and the girl were plodding along the beach, learning to walk again. They seemed to have become things of lead, ponderous and cumbersome. It was as if they had never known Earth's gravitation.

The sun was shining and a breath of warmth was in the air, though the chill from the icebergs warned of bitter nights.

Ambling some distance from the shore, they found grass and weeds cropping up. Earth was not dead, after all. It would give them sustenance, and so might the sea. There was enough concentrated food in the plane to last them several months, and then they could plant the grain and vegetable seed left by Professor Burke. *The Pioneer* would house them and protect them from the cold.

"Another Adam and Eve, but a strange Eden," Ernest said whimsically. "An Eden *sans* everything but us."

"A new Adami and Heva," Mildred smiled. "It's an older account of the creation than that given in Genesis, and much nicer, I think. I was reading about it in one of the Professor's books."

"Yes, I recall it," Ernest said. "The Supreme Brahma put the man and woman on an island and told them to remain there. But Adami persuaded Heva to migrate. Brahma cursed them both, but the man spoke, 'Curse me, but curse not her; it was not her fault, but mine.' The Supreme Brahma said, 'I will save her, but not thee.' But the woman did not wish to live without him, and said, 'If thou wilt not spare him, spare neither me, for I love him.' Then the great Brahma relented and said, 'I will watch over you and your children forever.'"

Ernest kissed the girl and held her in long embrace. Then, hand in hand, they began to explore their paradise. One man and one woman.

THE END

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AMAZING STORIES

The ATOMIC RIDDLE

by Edward S. Sears

Author of "The Shadow on the Spark."



"Put 'em up everybody!"

This command came in curt fierce tones from Frenchy Vergoyne. Not being under arrest and being a very accomplished criminal, he had picked the pockets of Inspector Craven and his two deputies, relieving them of their weapons and their watches. Two of the pistols he now held in his hands.



HE citizens of Houston, New Jersey, might have been observed about two o'clock of an afternoon in October, 192—, congregated about the twelve-story building of the Castile Bank and Trust Company.

On the night before this gathering of citizens, \$100,000 in notes, the bulk of it in large denominations, had been placed in the company's brand-new, modern safe, in the presence of at least six employes of the bank. The cashier, one of the most prominent men of Houston's younger set, had set the combination and gone home. Over night the money had vanished. The safe was intact.

Roger Bolton, the cashier, was the last of an old family, which had numbered statesmen, engineers and educators in its ranks, from early in the nineteenth century. His college career had been brilliant. He had won the right to wear the University letter on his sweater; in short, at thirty, he might be considered to have launched himself on a fine career in the world of finance. His salary was \$10,000 a year, a sum, which the bank considered a sufficient guarantee against temptation.

Being a tall, fine looking chap, athletic, with regular features and good bearing, it had aroused no astonishment when his engagement to the daughter of one of the richest financial wizards of New York was announced. Olive Velie, at twenty-five, was still unmarried, although her opportunities included four or five possible titles and two or three possible baronial estates. She had large dreamy eyes, above which were delicately lined brows, a nose not too large, yet scarcely negligible, a mouth, not exactly bowed but rather inclined at times to a straight-lined severity. Her chin was well rounded, cheeks not too full and her neck was very shapely and pillar like. She was full bosomed and had abundant dark hair.

Olive had walked into her father's office while he was discussing with Roger Bolton, the terms of a new issue of Molgravian bonds—Molgravia being one of the Balkan States somewhat enlarged by the League of Nations after the World War. Bolton's grasp of the subject aroused old Velie's admiration to such an extent that he complimented the young man on his suggested distribution of the weight of the loan. And Tom Velie was not noted for his lavishness in praise.

"Olive," said Velie, "let me present Mr. Roger Bolton, who has gone far beyond the a, b, c, of banking."

Roger, looking up, beheld a girl, somewhat above medium height, dark haired and altogether lovely. He noticed that her bare arms were perfectly formed, her teeth showing through a very gracious smile, as she acknowledged the introduction. Apparently both young people recognized an immediate kinship.

"Father," she said, "we have no engagements this evening. Mr. Bolton, if he has the leisure, might stop with us to dinner."

Bolton, naturally, accepted. They went to the theatre, came home and found something to talk about until one in the morning. For six months much of the young man's spare time was spent at the Velie residence or accompanying Olive to one function or another. They were soon engaged, but their marriage

was placed in the indefinite future, because Bolton regarded \$10,000 a year as a poor match for the Velie millions.

This is how matters stood on the day the people of Houston congregated about the Castile Bank and Trust Company's twelve story building. In the interval between the placing of the \$100,000 in the safe and Bolton's return the following morning, the entire sum had disappeared. This money was in notes but by some curious oversight, the sum of \$10,000 in gold, which was not part of the Molgravian loan, had not been touched. Bolton, dumbfounded, could not even suggest an explanation. Indeed his sudden look of terror, so far from his ordinary bearing of cool courage, at once gave rise to sinister suspicion.

The safe which had recently been installed remained to all appearances exactly as it had been the previous afternoon, but the money was gone. The police immediately began an inquisition of banks and clerks.

Five clerks and tellers were positive they had seen Bolton place the money in the safe and set the combination. No alarm had been sounded during the night. Nothing indicated that the safe had been broken into. Nothing had been disturbed in the bank. It seemed obvious that Bolton had placed only a few packages in the safe and had secreted the \$100,000 somewhere during the night. And as Bolton offered no explanation, he was placed under arrest.

The citizens, who had almost idolized this young man, who had made such rapid strides under their very observation, were immediately convinced they had been nursing a viper and the downcast Bolton was greeted with jeers as a patrol wagon carried him to headquarters for a severe grilling which involved endless repetition of the never ending query—

"What have you done with the loot?"

Olive Velie, after a night of rosy dreams for the future, in which Bolton was steadily rising in the financial world, awoke to a rude disenchantment. When she saw a copy of the Houston Globe, a photograph of her sweetheart gazed at her beneath a streamer which announced, "Houston's most prominent banker arrested. Roger Bolton charged with \$100,000 theft."

Old Tom Velie caught the headlines at the breakfast table.

"Well," he cried, "I'm damned if I would ever have believed that of him. Crazy, suicidal mania that was. Why, the young fool, if he wanted \$100,000 to get married on, I would have settled it on you both any time, and he knew it."

"Oh, father, don't talk so," said Olive. "You don't imagine for a moment, he took all that money, do you?"

"It looks mighty bad. He was the only one who

handled the money. The money is gone. The safe hasn't been opened. I will get the best counsel I can for him, though."

"Well, unless he admits it himself, I will never believe he did anything so idiotic. The moment the investigation is over, I am going to him. God knows he probably will be half tortured to death before we get to see him," said Olive.

In the meantime, the police officials of Houston, eager to add to their laurels, were putting Roger through that refined process known as the third degree. The examination was conducted in a corner of

*T*HERE are more ways than one to kill a cat. This we all know, and there are more ways than one, thanks to physics, to open up a safe, even if it doesn't look as though it had been opened, and \$100,000 are missing. Many things are possible today that were impossible some years back. Of course, we admit too, that the recipe which the author gives here might furnish valuable information to safe-crackers and bank robbers—maybe. At any rate, The Atomic Riddle makes an interesting twenty minutes reading that keeps you guessing to the end.

one of the big rooms of the prison office. A light was shining directly into his eyes. All about him were grouped officers in uniform and one or two in plain clothes. There was no cruelty. Simply the same, endless repetition of the same monotonous questions.

"Come clean, now, Roger. Where is the money?" or,

"Who else was in on this? Who took the money away?" and the like.

To all these questions Roger replied that he was as much mystified as they.

Now, this investigation brought out two additional clues.

A new night watchman who had come highly recommended, but a few months before, disappeared the day after Roger's arrest. An assistant cashier coming from another city, but whose credentials had seemed to be good, was also missing. Naturally, it was assumed they were Roger's accomplices.

Therefore, as a welcome relief to the same endless question, Roger was asked from time to time . . .

"Where is the watchman?" or "Where is the assistant cashier?"

Roger stood the ordeal well. Finally, to bring the inquiry to some kind of coherence, the officers let New York counsel, selected by Tom Velie, visit him. They installed dictaphones in order to record any slip Roger might make while he was being interviewed. But it was hopeless. He would only say . . .

"I know nothing at all about the robbery. I am as amazed as you are. If I could explain it I would do so gladly."

Willoughby, the lawyer, an ex-prosecutor who had resumed practice at the bar, reported to Velie and Olive in a tremendous rage.

"How can I help that young fool if he won't take me into his confidence? He simply repeats over and over again that he knows nothing about it."

"Well, if he knows anything about it, I am going to get it out of him for my own satisfaction," exclaimed Olive. "I know Roger is incapable of anything dishonorable. He knows I would wash my hands of him in a second if he ever stooped to anything so low. He is probably so excited by this time that he doesn't know what he is saying."

Olive ordered the car and told the chauffeur to let no grass grow under the wheels on the road to Houston. The prison officials willingly let her visit Roger in his cell, eavesdropping on every word that passed.

"Roger," she greeted him, "can't you think how that money got away from you?"

For all this brusque greeting, she embraced him with all the faith and fervor in the world.

"You darling," said Roger, with the first hopeful note for a week, in his voice, "If you had thought me guilty, I would almost have believed it myself."

"Now tell me all about the afternoon when you locked the safe, Roger. You were with me last Thursday night, the night before the money disappeared. Let's see. You took dinner with us. Now taking an hour and a half to drive over to Houston, that gave you just about time enough to dress for dinner. Describe how you put the money away. Your lawyer must have something to work on, you know."

This conversation delighted the listening police and detectives who were taking notes at high speed. Having decided that Roger was guilty, all these details had been overlooked or left for the future.

"Thursday afternoon, my last day at the bank," said Roger, "our new safe had just been installed. In the vault was the bulk of the money the bank kept on hand. But in this new safe, I placed \$100,000, the amount of our subscription to the Molgravian loan—our proportion of their new \$50,000,000 issue floated

through New York banks with your father's aid. This was classified into denominations and each package carefully marked with the amount in each. In a steel box, in the same safe, was \$10,000 in gold. I wonder if that is gone, too."

"It is not," said Olive. "That makes it all the more suspicious for you. But don't worry. What did you know of those two men who are missing?"

"Very little. The president of the bank, Mr. Briscoe, said they came to him highly recommended. Lawson, the assistant cashier, knew all about foreign loans. His accent, however, made me suspect that Lawson was not his real name. Then, he was so much above his position. He was of slight physique, machine-like in his mind. His memory was prodigious. His eyes never wavered. Just looked right through you. The watchman was not a Houston man, but evidently had had experience in guarding banks. I never said more than 'How do you do?' to him."

"Well, you have told me some things the lawyer couldn't get out of you and that will help some. Now, Roger, don't lose your head and don't worry if I am not over to see you again for awhile."

She held him in a kind of motherly embrace for a moment and left the prison. When she reached New York, Olive went straight to Mr. Willoughby with her story.

"Not much in that, Miss Velie," he said, "but where we are certain our client is innocent, it is a great help. So far, the only proof of Bolton's guilt is the fact that the money has disappeared. And that is pretty nearly enough to convict. Whatever you can do from now on, Miss Velie, will not be too much."

THE Castile Bank and Trust Company carried both burglary insurance and protection against embezzlement. In addition to this, Roger was bonded in the sum of \$25,000. Consequently, these two insurance companies at once set their sleuths on the trail of the missing money. After one week of investigation, they were just where they had started. Roger was arraigned and charged with the embezzlement of \$100,000 from the Castile Bank and Trust Company.

Houston officials called on Inspector Craven of the New York police department to look into the robbery. If the money could be recovered and the guilty brought to justice, Inspector Craven was the man to do it. Combined with bulldog tenacity, his keenness and the knowledge of how criminal minds worked, was his remarkable intelligence in finding a motive for the most mysterious underworld blows at society. A friend of Tom Velie, he discussed the robbery with him before visiting Houston. Though reluctant to jump at conclusions, Inspector Craven said frankly it looked pretty bad for Roger Bolton. Nor was he less frank with Roger himself when he saw that far from cheerful young man.

"Mr. Bolton," he began, "I am familiar with the facts as far as they are known. What I want you to do is to offer me some theory or point to some person, other than yourself, who might have opened that safe, taken the money out, and set the combination again."

"Inspector Craven," Bolton replied, "to accuse anyone else is entirely beyond me. Not even the president of the bank knew the combination to that safe. That was my own responsibility. The combination was in my head. No one could have read it for it was never written. Either there is a way to open that safe without knowing the combination, impossible in my opinion, or the money went through the walls of the safe, which is equally impossible."

"Well, Mr. Bolton," said Inspector Craven, rising, "if you intend to make that statement to a jury, you may as well prepare to spend the next few years of

your life in prison. If the sum of \$10,000 in gold had not remained in the safe, I should almost adopt the theory that the safe had been removed and another substituted in its place. That is as fantastic as your supposition that the money walked through the walls of the safe. Knowing you, and Tom Velie, and especially Miss Olive Velie, I accept for the moment, at least, your pleas of innocence. Perhaps after I have examined the safe, I may change my opinion. Good bye."

From the prison, Inspector Craven walked the short distance to the Castile Bank and Trust Company. Mr. Briscoe came at once to greet him.

"How do you do, Inspector," he said. "Come right in. I suppose you want to look around."

"Yes, Mr. Briscoe. Is the safe about as it was the night of the robbery?"

"It has not been touched. I have never heard of anything quite so mysterious. We have audited Bol-

York, he found Olive Velie waiting in his office.

"I heard that you had gone to Houston, Inspector," she said. "Did you find anything encouraging?"

"Well, Miss Velie, there is one chance in a million that the money was put in the safe as Roger Bolton says, and that it was taken out. How that could be done is too deep for me. Can you imagine how the walls of a safe could remain intact after having been opened to permit the removal of \$100,000 and yet leave not a trace? It is not the very best safe in the world. A good yeggman could cut that door out in about ten minutes with an oxyacetylene torch. But he could not leave it intact. There are no finger prints. But modern crooks no longer leave finger prints. Their presence would tell us something but their absence means little. Frankly, Miss Olive, as things stand at present, I should do exactly what the police of Houston have done. I should place Roger Bolton under arrest. Still, I must admit that if he knew anything about the



The examination was conducted in a corner of one of the big rooms of the prison office. A light was shining directly into his eyes. There was no cruelty. Simply the same, endless repetition of the same monotonous questions.

ton's account and there is not the slightest suspicion of irregularity. Of course, two employees have disappeared, but neither the assistant cashier nor the watchman knew the combination. Then, too, there was absolutely no sign of any disturbance."

He led the way to the safe. It was not specially large, but was formidable looking, nevertheless. The door was about five feet high, with a combination lock of respectable size. It stood to the rear of the bank with one side exposed and another set in an alcove. Inspector Craven examined the exterior and used his microscope from time to time, but said nothing. The interior of the safe revealed little. Everything was as it had been the night the money disappeared.

When the inspector reached headquarters in New

money, he would have betrayed himself in some way, unless he was a hardened crook, which, of course, I do not for a moment believe."

"What can we do, Inspector? Isn't there a man skilled in safes and combinations? Isn't there someone among the manufacturers of safes who could imagine a way the safe could have been robbed?"

"I thought of that, Miss Olive. I consulted some of them and they say Roger must be guilty. I even wrote a letter to a friend of mine who has a most unusual thinking apparatus, which has often turned my theories into ridicule. But he is down in New Orleans now, a guest of the Southern Medical Association, and will be there a week longer. By that time, Roger may be so deeply involved that it will be impossible to help him. Would you like to go to New Orleans with your

father on the chance that Dr. Jarvis might be able to help?"

"I'd take any chance," said Olive. "But father need not go. I am quite capable of taking care of myself. Will you give me a letter to your friend?"

"Certainly. Miss Roberts," he called to his secretary, "kindly take this letter."

"Dr. Milton Jarvis,
"Magnolia Hotel,
"New Orleans, La.

"My dear Dr. Jarvis:

"The bearer of this letter, Miss Olive Velie, is the daughter of Mr. Tom Velie, one of our leading financiers, who is, of course, well known to you. She will explain her problem to you, a problem, whose solution, I freely confess, is beyond me. \$100,000 has been taken from a safe in the Castile Bank and Trust Company, if Miss Velie's fiancé is to be credited, by burglars of such skill that they have left no trace of their presence, on the safe. Now, how can \$100,000 be taken through steel walls of ample thickness without leaving a clue? Unless some one figures out how this can be done, Roger Bolton is likely to do a stretch in the pen, and I may have to help send him there. This is not a medical problem, but you keep up with science so much, that I wondered if you could help in this case.

"Sincerely yours,

"CRAVEN, *Police Inspector.*"

The one night she passed on the train was a sleepless one, yet before she had given way to despair or had conjured up a happier vision, the train was crossing the bridge over Lake Pontchartrain and she was in New Orleans. At the Magnolia Hotel she learned Doctor Jarvis had gone to Touro Infirmary to deliver a lecture at ten-thirty. As it was but nine, Olive had a short time for primping before going out to Prytania Avenue, where the Infirmary is located. She had just settled in her chair in the large auditorium when the president of the Medical Association introduced Dr. Milton Jarvis.

Olive peered curiously at this man of whom she expected so much. He was rather tall, very straight, slim, with piercing dark eyes. His clothing was quite in the mode, but cut to the figure, so that his extreme muscular development was apparent. Neither his clothing nor his build attracted her attention so much as the extreme intelligence of his face, however. His eyes were knowing, his lips firm. He did not seem to be the man who would take contradiction patiently.

Dr. Jarvis opened his talk with comments on a lecture given by one of the prominent members of the Association the previous evening. This lecture, it seemed, had to do with Pyloric ulcers. He reviewed, for the benefit of the nurses, the various forms of treatment; first, an operation by which the pylorus was severed at its junction with the stomach, the offending lesion cut off and the end of the pylorus reattached to its host. This he described as a pretty serious remedy. Then he spoke of the various diets which either irritated the sore spot or soothed it.

Even to so alert and intelligent a girl as Olive, such a topic would have proved a severe trial under ordinary circumstances. But Tom Velie's sister, Anne Rounsaville, the widow of a French diplomat, was a woman who, for the last ten years of her bereavement, divided her affections equally between a bad tempered fox terrier and a pyloric ulcer. As Olive had borne patiently with all her symptoms, she was the old lady's favorite. Anne Rounsaville, having an analytical temperament, recounted to Olive at every visit the precise effect of soft food, of course breads, of acids, of bases and what not, on her pet ailment.

Hence, Dr. Jarvis was treading familiar ground in discussing the various phases of this all too common ailment. It was a great disappointment to Anne Rounsaville that an attack of pneumonia proved fatal and all her worry over the pyloric ulcer went for naught. But gratitude for Olive's patience as a listener led her aunt to leave her a fortune of more than half a million.

WHEN he had discussed topics purely medical for some time, Dr. Jarvis reverted to biology and chemistry of which he spoke like a man riding a hobby.

"You must know," he said, "that not only in old ruins and yellowed parchments can be traced the history of man, but in the strata or successive levels of the earth we can likewise trace the history of the elements. What we call matter has an appearance of life. Take so common a thing as ammonia for example. It may be placed in combinations that serve as food and enter into our bodies as part of living organisms. It may be left in another state and become fuel. Atoms, molecules, colloids, all have their histories and all have been modified with time. Fundamentally we are near the conclusion that the hydrogen atom and beyond it the hydrogen electrons and protons are elemental. If hydrogen is at the basis of all other atoms except that there are more electrons in one than in the other, what is the difference between the hydrogen electrons in vegetable tissue and those which enter into material in a skyscraper? Simply a difference in the number and arrangement of electrons about the nucleus containing the same number of protons.

"So, the barrier between the vegetable world and the animal world, or the mineral world, which in all the old books was so sharply defined that they were classed belonging forever to separate worlds, has been torn down.

"Our reason in medicine, as everywhere, is our best guide. Formerly it was all a matter of *materia medica* and knowing your formulae. But now it is different. Suppose you nurses were watching a patient who showed a surprisingly high blood count. Suppose that instead of the customary 10,000 or 12,000 leucocytes you found that the patient's blood had 20,000 or 30,000. You would at once conclude that the patient was suffering, to use a popular term, from malignant anaemia.

"Suppose a doctor of wide experience were called upon to testify in court in a case against an insurance company where several people in the same neighborhood of a large city simultaneously displayed a similar activity of white corpuscles. One patient would get down with apparent anaemia and the insurance company would be called upon to pay a stated weekly sum on an insurance policy. Fifteen or twenty people so afflicted would make enough inroads on the insurance company funds to inspire an investigation.

"In such a case, reason would tell you that it was extremely improbable that fifteen people in one neighborhood would so suffer. Then it would occur to you that something besides anaemia could produce a sudden increase in the blood count. If you remembered your studies, you would at once conclude as I did, 'An injection of peptones or nucleins would increase the count of leucocytes.'

"That is exactly what had taken place. The neighborhood was notorious for fraudulent street car accidents and these, it was found, were due to the activity of a number of acrobats who could dislocate arms and legs at will and simulate, at will, a terrible fall with the utmost realism. So we exposed the fraud and the people who were apparently suffering from

anaemia because of an injection of peptones administered by an unscrupulous physician, who had been disciplined for malpractice.

"I talk to you of these removed topics to remind you young people that whatever your profession, your reason is what distinguishes you from all other qualities of the animals. Memory does not so distinguish us, for an elephant will remember when man has forgotten.

"When I was younger, the study of amoeba, the one-celled organism which could move and reproduce by subdividing, seemed to me the most useless thing one could imagine. But when we examine a drop of blood and see the amoeba like phagocytes surrounding their prey, the disease germ on which they feed, the amoeba in our own systems acquires the interesting relation of an important part of our being."

As Olive strove to understand this intricate talk, some gleam of hope shot through her mind. If, as the doctor asserted, there was no fundamental difference between the matter in a plant and a skyscraper, why should there be any impossibility, if you had the right philosophy or the right science involved, in drawing bank notes through the walls of a safe. She grew more confident that Dr. Jarvis, of all others, might perhaps find an answer to her enigma. After the lecture was over, she waited until the various doctors and nurses had spoken to him. She addressed him as he was turning to leave the hall.

"Dr. Jarvis," she said, "I am Olive Velie. I have come all the way from New York to see if you could help us. Inspector Craven said if anyone could solve our mystery, you could."

After reading the inspector's letter, Dr. Jarvis said,

"A Bolton rob a bank! Absurd. Of course, the safe was opened. And Inspector Craven says the robbers left no traces. Now what traces did he look for? Muddy footprints? A series of easily read finger prints? A combination broken with a sledge hammer? I should be jumping at conclusions if I theorized without seeing the safe. But I am a doctor. I deal with ailments of the body, not with bank vaults and safes."

"Oh, but doctor," cried Olive, "the Inspector says it may be some freak of science and that it baffles him. He believed you could suggest some key to the mystery."

"Well, Miss Olive, there is but one answer to such blind and flattering confidence. The principal work of the medical conference is over, so I will make my adieux and return to New York with you."

On the train, coming back, Olive Velie told Dr. Jarvis all she knew of the situation.

"Well, I am taking your word for it that Roger is innocent," Dr. Jarvis said, when she had finished. "If he is, certainly the money did not walk away. If it is gone, someone took it. These officials see only what is before their eyes. Why, just from what you have told me I can surmise some factors they have overlooked. I know the details in a general way as the papers gave them. The Picayune had a good story about it. One thing strikes me now. Isn't it peculiar that robbers, if they were ordinary robbers, ignored \$10,000 in gold which they could have had easily enough?"

"The money which has been taken from the safe is part of a foreign loan. Who would be interested in preventing a foreign loan? People, obviously, who were either preparing a royalist coup or those who were against all capital. They might be both scientists and crooks or they might be fanatics who imagined that they were destined to rescue mankind from capitalistic woes, either real or fancied. If they had brains enough to conceive a plot to defeat such a loan, would they leave traces of their exploit? Not very obvious ones, you may be sure. You said communists are active in

Molgravia. If we knew something of the state of affairs there, it might afford us a clue. As soon as we return, you go to the newspaper 'morgue' and get me what information you can on conditions in Molgravia for the past year."

"Dr. Jarvis," cried Olive, "I'll do just as you say, for I know of no one who can help us but yourself."

"We'll see. But let me caution you. Do not write that you have seen me. Do not tell anyone that I am interested. The men who planned this robbery, if anyone did plan it, would not stop at anything, so you must not give them any ground for suspicion. I feel reasonably sure they have given no thought to detection. If the theory forming in my mind is correct, their plan was so diabolically cunning, that few men would suspect a robbery."

How this restriction not to write, ate into Olive's heart, may well be imagined. But his command to investigate events in Molgravia gave her something to occupy her mind.

"You have heard," Dr. Jarvis had said in the big convention hall, "the phrase, 'beware of the man of one book.' But I should say, beware of the man who knows only one book well and many other books passing well. A broad general knowledge is essential in any profession and lack of general attainments is a handicap to success in medicine as in all other professions."

"This man," thought Olive to herself, "must already have reached a solution of the safe robbery. And he was a famous physician and surgeon, not a famous detective. But," she thought again, "acute brains are found in all ranks of mankind and much good philosophy may be expounded by a straight thinking, uneducated farmer."

EVENTS began to happen with the arrival of Doctor Jarvis in New York two days later. In the morning he walked to his garage and opened the door. As he threw it open, the odor of gasoline was unusually strong. This struck him as peculiar. As he opened the door of his car, a coupe, the odor became very powerful. His eyes being observant, Dr. Jarvis noted that the floor boards were not quite even. With a pair of pliers he raised the floor boards. Beneath was the battery in its metal case. Following the odor of gasoline, he saw that the battery box was filled with gasoline. The long, thick cable which led to the starter was resting clear of the battery box, but any motion of the car would throw it against the metal box.

"Now, what would happen," the doctor asked himself, "if that cable were short circuited and sparked at the point of contact with the box? It would be a good fat spark and with the gas vapor confined, there would be a powerful explosion. The least I could hope for would be a few weeks in the hospital."

He thanked his lucky stars that the leak of gas had occurred just a few weeks after he had installed a new cable. But he lifted the cable clear very gingerly. Then he discovered that within the metal shield the insulation of the wire had been cut away for a foot along the cable. The moment he would have started the car the cable would have been jarred to the metal box; there would have been a short circuit and an explosion that might have had any imaginable result.

This incident set the doctor to thinking. With a cord, he tied up the cable to prevent it from making a contact. With a large sponge, he began to remove the gasoline from the box. When this task was completed, he unscrewed the cable at the positive pole to render it harmless. That his theory of the bank robbery was the correct one he now had no doubt. His arrival in New York had been transmitted to the ring-leaders who feared what he might discover. To allay

their fears, therefore, he decided to make no visit to the Castile Bank and Trust Company at Houston. There was but one possible solution of the robbery. His first duty was to report to the inspector the attempt to wound or kill him and put that official on his guard.

Returning to his chambers he called for Inspector Craven. When he heard Craven's voice, he said,

"I'm coming to see you in a taxi, Inspector," he said, "Just had an accident to my car. It nearly blew up."

"Accident, hell," said the inspector. "Wait till you get here. I had one of those accidents, too."

When Dr. Jarvis reached headquarters, he found the Inspector somewhat excited.

"Doc," he cried, "some poor devil, probably a car thief, broke into my garage early this morning. When he put his foot on the starter, she blew up and he was killed. I investigated the thing myself. A decent sized stick of dynamite with a percussion cap had been wedged under the starter chain. The moment the starter moved, off she went. Did your car have dynamite, too?"

"No, mine was not so deadly but just as complete. My wiring system had the insulation cut. I might have been maimed or killed if I had not discovered it. I believe our Houston bank robbers are opening war."

"What," exploded Inspector Craven, "do you think young Bolton is at the head of a gang of bank robbers?"

"What nonsense! The papers which I read gave all the numbers on the stolen certificates. Have any of these bills been offered to any bank, hotel or merchant? If my supposition is correct, they have not."

"None have been reported to the police, at any rate," said the Inspector, whose curiosity was aroused. "Do you mean to say that without having been to the bank you have already arrived at a theory of how the money disappeared?"

"After the events of this morning, I have no doubt whatever. If you have enough confidence in my judgment, I will tell you how we can arrive at a solution of the mystery. If I am wrong, the right man is in jail."

"I'll be glad to do anything that looks like a show of activity."

"No one suspects now that I have a clue, as I have not been in New York, and have had no opportunity to go over the ground," said the doctor. "If I go to the bank now, it would indicate that I hoped to find one. Let us arrange a meeting at the Castile Bank and Trust Company offices tomorrow night, when it will attract least attention. It will be after banking hours and we shall not be interrupted. We will need a few 'supers' however."

At the Molgravian communist headquarters in New York, you will find some emissary of the communist leader, Serge Malakieff, or perhaps one of his laboratory assistants. He will be an intellectual man. Probably, too, not very robust physically. Invite him to meet us there tomorrow night. Any form of invitation will bring him, I am sure. Next, you must find the most skilful burglar now at liberty. He is one who operates with uncanny cleverness. He uses a torch. It is either oxyhydrogen or oxyacetylene. But he never makes jagged holes. His safes are opened in either a perfect circle or a perfect ellipse."

"By heaven, Doc, you must have been looking over our gallery. That is a good description of Frenchy Vergoyne's method. But he is doing a stretch for that New Brunswick robbery, unless he was pardoned or paroled within the last two weeks. I must look him up and arrest him if he is at liberty."

"If he is free, learn if he knows any good safe-painters, who handle quick dryers. If there are any

unusually good machinists or metal workers at communist headquarters, you might invite them up, too. I think about five men carried out the robbery. Perhaps more. If, as I anticipate, these men attend the lecture I propose to give, I will show you tomorrow night how the safe was robbed. Perhaps you can recover the money. However, that is a police matter in which I am not interested."

Doctor Jarvis then shook hands with Inspector Craven and walked off to a consultation on X-ray treatments as if the matter had been finally settled, leaving Inspector Craven staring open mouthed as he passed out the door.

He was half inclined to prevent himself going into so hairbrained a scheme by calling the doctor on the telephone and dropping the investigation. The doctor had not seen the bank, nor the safe, nor even young Bolton. But looking over the memoranda on his desk he saw one item that had been placed there this very morning. It stated that Frenchy Vergoyne had been released on parole by the governor three weeks previously. It seemed he had a war record.

The inspector immediately set his men on the burglar's trail. He was arrested as he stepped on a train-bound west. Although he had been doing apparently nothing, he was very well provided with funds.

"Well, chief," he said with a shade of defiance, "what's your charge?"

"No charge at all, Frenchy," said the Inspector. "We want you to tell us how a safe can be cracked. Just a sort of witness for the present. Get a lawyer if you like, but I have no charge."

Frenchy, much mystified, was given a comfortable guest room, with everything at his command except liberty. He decided not to call for a lawyer.

Inspector Craven, feeling worried now, consulted the District Attorney. Mr. Glover, being a New York official, and not likely to serve on the case against Bolton, if it ever came up, took a liberal view of the situation.

"What have you done, after all, except detain Frenchy as a witness? If Frenchy afterwards sues for damages to his character or reputation, what good do you suppose it would do him? I believe this doctor is a clever guesser. And if he guesses anything else than that young Bolton took the money, I will buy you a good dinner."

When, on his return to his office, Inspector Craven found Olive Velie on the telephone, he was in a peevish humor.

"What can I do for you, Miss Velie?" he asked.

"Have you learned anything about the robbery?"

"I can't say that I have," he said sourly enough. "Doctor Jarvis has persuaded me to call a meeting at the bank in Houston tomorrow night, at eight o'clock. You can be there, if you like. The Doctor has undertaken to persuade Houston officials to have Mr. Bolton there, too. I have arrested a poor, innocent burglar for nothing at all and what his lawyers will do to me will be plenty. Then he babbled innocently about some painter friends of his and I have invited a few Molgravian communists to attend what seems to be a scientific lecture the doctor wants to give. I really believe he has lost his mind."

"How droll you are, Inspector," said Olive with a laugh. "I am so glad it is all over. I will be there, you may be sure."

INSPECTOR CRAVEN'S worst fears were realized the following night when, accompanied by two men of his staff, he went, with the marvelling Frenchy, to the Castile Bank and Trust Company. Three rows of chairs had been placed in the space back of the tellers' cages and immediately to the front of the safe

which had been robbed. Near the safe, the doctor had placed a large blackboard.

As they entered the building, he saw a knot of Molgravian communists in animated conversation. They smiled as he entered the bank. Mr. Briscoe, the president of the bank, was there. Roger was there, guarded by two officers. Dr. Jarvis was standing before his blackboard. There were four other individuals, Molgravians, in the room besides Frenchy.

Tom Velie had insisted on accompanying Olive to the demonstration. He expected to witness a farce. When he saw the blackboard, he yawned. Dr. Jarvis was perhaps the only one, with the exception of the Molgravians, who was unmoved. Frenchy Vergoyne returned the doctor's inspection with contempt. He was the professional type, this burglar. Huge, hulking in body, about thirty-five, heavy jowled, cold of eye, Vergoyne did not lack intelligence. His lips closed tightly, indicating habitual reticence.

Two of the Molgravians were more interesting. One, Doctor Jarvis noted, was a short thick set man, with dark, curly hair. His face was bronzed and intelligent, but with an unmistakable air of the craftsman. His hands were calloused, while around the nails could be seen scars of all kinds, from cuts or bruises made by metals or tools. This Molgravian bore the Americanized name of Grant Smith.

The other Molgravian who attracted the doctor's attention met his eye with easy assurance. In physique, he was frail, his shoulders narrow; he might be suspected of weak lungs. But the intellectual in his face was so marked that Doctor Jarvis started. On his wrists, Doctor Jarvis, an expert in all kinds of scientific apparatus, noted brown stains. In another man, he would have said they were signs of a disordered liver. But from his own experience, he recognized them for what they were—X-ray burns. This man was known as Carlino Angulescu.

Angulescu's forehead was somewhat rounded. His brown eyes glowed with a light of self-sufficiency so great that it held an assumption of regal or celestial scorn. The aquiline nose, finely designed, face finely moulded, convinced the doctor that if he sought an unusual being among the Molgravians, he need search no further.

Seeing everyone looking expectantly at him, Doctor Jarvis took his station before the blackboard.

"Miss Velie and gentlemen," he said, including even Frenchy Vergoyne in his bow, "I shall be as brief as possible in discussing the intricate matters which bring us together. I shall have to indulge in some political speculation, which is far indeed from my natural bent.

"Now this \$100,000 robbery, laid at the door of a young man who had nothing to gain and all to lose by such an act, seems to be nothing but a simple breach of trust. But if young Bolton took the money, why did he not take all? I learned that the money stolen was part of a sum intended to make up the new Molgravian loan, which was recently financed in America. So I asked myself, 'would anyone desire to prevent the financing of the Molgravian loan?'"

"It seemed to me that if there was any definite movement against the rulers of Molgravia, it might furnish a motive. I found stories of a strong communistic movement there with an active propaganda in the United States.

"Having found a motive which might induce certain individuals to go to great lengths to prevent financing a loan which would materially increase the power and prestige of the royal house, there was a strange problem to solve. How could anyone but Bolton open the safe and leave no trace of having opened it?"

"Discarding the extreme improbability that Bolton

was the guilty man, I considered the surroundings. Item one, a new safe; item two, \$100,000 taken, \$10,000 in gold left; item three, \$100,000 was the share of the bank's Molgravian loan. Finally, I reached the extremely bizarre conclusion that the safe had been opened, the money taken out, and the safe closed again.

"In order to make clear how this was done, I shall have to go over some facts and theories of elemental chemistry and physics."

A look of incredulity appeared on the face of Inspector Craven. He pinched himself. The doctor evidently had started no farce. Was he fool enough to think a lecture on chemistry would solve a safe robbery? He was on the point of walking out, but recalled a few other lectures by Dr. Jarvis and stayed. Bolton was all ears. Olive was following every word. Tom Velie was nodding.

"First of all we must talk about two elements. Hydrogen and oxygen. You may recall, some of you, if you read what scientists are doing, that several years ago, when these two elements were first liquefied, the greatest handicaps were in finding pressures enormous enough to produce liquefaction. What they finally discovered was this: The gases themselves will contribute to their own liquefaction. If sealed hermetically in the instrument or vessel, the hydrogen or oxygen gas on being heated, will expand until it finally exerts sufficient pressure for some of the gas to liquefy.

"Now I must describe briefly, the nature of hydrogen. It commonly exists in the molecular state. Two atoms make up this molecule. Each atom has one proton and one electron, the proton carrying a positive charge of electricity and the electron a negative charge. To break up this molecule of hydrogen into two atoms, the scientist, Langmuir, calculated would require an energy of 100,000 calories, or sufficient to increase the temperature of the gas to 36,000 degrees Fahrenheit—far more than the heat of the sun.

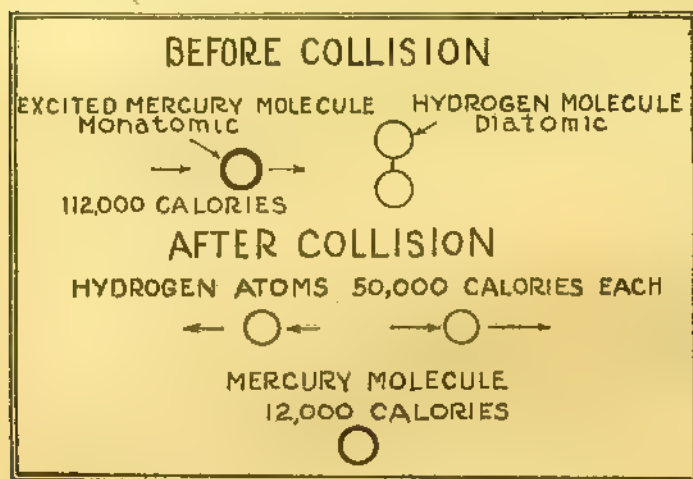
"The scientists could not accumulate so much energy or heat and bring it to bear on the hydrogen molecules. But remember this. All forms of energy are interchangeable. You turn a button in your kitchen and your electricity becomes heat. You push another button and your electricity becomes light. You fire a boiler, run a dynamo and heat becomes electricity. In the various forms of light there are varying forms of energy. In fact, the modern idea of light is that it is composed of bundles of energy. The different forms of light correspond to various forms and quantities of energy.

"In the ultra-violet light waves, for instance, was found the energy corresponding to the 100,000 calories, which was the amount estimated necessary to break up the hydrogen molecule. But hydrogen is immune to the influence of such light."

Inspector Craven was preparing to join Tom Velie in his soothing nap, when he observed the Molgravian, Carlino Angulescu. As Doctor Jarvis began to comment on the nature of the hydrogen molecule, his face lost its disdainful look and he bent forward that he might lose not a syllable. If this Molgravian saw something in the doctor's crazy talk, the Inspector thought he might at least try to follow it. But he glanced from time to time at the Molgravian, whose interest seemed to grow rather than wane.

"If," continued Dr. Jarvis, "the immunity of the hydrogen molecule to the influence of the ultra-violet rays could not be broken, then one very promising method of obtaining atomic hydrogen would have been in vain. But other elements do not share the immunity of hydrogen. Mercury vapor absorbs ultra-violet light very readily. The problem, therefore, became simpler. Why not load mercury atoms with ultra-violet light

and bombard the hydrogen molecule with them? The mercury atom, which has absorbed ultra-violet light, is called an excited mercury atom. And these mercury atoms, even in the proportion of one to ten thousand in a gas mixture, will become excited with sufficient ultra-violet light waves to make the equivalent of 112,000 calories in energy, which is 12,000 more than the 100,000 needed to dissolve the union of the two atoms in the hydrogen molecule. Now if a quantity of these excited mercury atoms is introduced into an atmosphere of molecular hydrogen, a number of collisions will take place. The excited mercury atoms will strike the hydrogen molecule and its 112,000 calories of ultra-violet energy will be exerted against the hydrogen molecule. The energy is sufficient to cause the two atoms of hydrogen to fly apart and the mercury atom, having given up its energy, is no longer excited. The action is like this: (Here Dr. Jarvis drew a couple of diagrams on the blackboard.)



"YOU will wonder at once what good is accomplished by this dissolution of the hydrogen molecule. Well, first of all, it makes available the enormous energy in heat, of 100,000 calories. For if we expand 100,000 calories to break up the hydrogen molecule, when the atoms come together again, we get our 100,000 calories of heat back. If we have a sufficient number of these atoms, we can get a heat far beyond that produced by any appliance now known.

"We have gone even further than this. Hydrogen ions or protons exist in sulphuric acid. When they meet the electrons, of which the electric current is composed, in a sulphuric acid solution, the electrons join the ions or protons and we see hydrogen atoms in the making.

"Atomic hydrogen is much more active than molecular hydrogen. And if we can find a means of using the 100,000 calories of heat developed every time two hydrogen atoms unite to form a molecule, we should have something very useful indeed in such a process, for example, as welding. Now, Miss Velie, if you will awaken your father, the rest of the demonstration will interest him."

Velie was awakened and the doctor resumed his lecture. Angulescu seemed absorbedly interested, which served to keep the Inspector awake.

"As ultra-violet rays are not easy to handle commercially, atomic hydrogen for welding can be procured in another way. If molecular hydrogen is passed into a powerful electric arc between tungsten electrodes, it will be broken up into atoms. These, coming out of the arc as they burn into the molecular form, again, generate heat, almost double that of the oxyhydrogen flame. Knowing this, the use of hydrogen atoms in welding becomes a certainty.

"All other welding is subject to what are known as fluxes from oxidation at the point of welding. Now why do we talk of welding by means of hydrogen atoms when we are seeking to unravel a bank robbery? I will show you very speedily. I have had the paint cleared from one side of this safe. Inspector Craven, will you be good enough to examine the side which was cleaned?"

The Inspector looked at the side of the safe and gave a low whistle of astonishment. In a perfect circle about the middle of this wall of the safe, the metal showed the mark of some kind of tampering. Apparently the metal had been cut with a tool of some kind and sealed shut with another tool. A band of a different color stood between the outer and the inner lines of the cut.

"What does it mean, Doc?" asked the Inspector, gaping with astonishment.

"It means just this, my friends," said Doctor Jarvis, "a hole was cut into the side of this safe and sealed shut. I believe we shall find another cut in the roof of the safe. The inside of that hole could not be sealed so well, but very few people would think of looking at the roof of the safe for an opening. It is considered a negligible matter."

The door of the safe swung open. When a light was thrown on the inside roof of the safe, there, sure enough, was the same sort of circular mark in the metal as was seen on the side of the safe.

Everybody now became thoroughly absorbed. Olive and Roger exchanged a glance of mutual relief. Tom Velie rubbed his eyes, saying, "Well, I'll be d—d." Inspector Craven was in a fever of impatience. Did that confounded doctor intend to lecture all night and possibly let the robbers, whoever they were, escape? And what had become of the \$100,000? After everyone had looked curiously at the marks on the safe, Doctor Jarvis resumed.

"I do not believe it is necessary for me to prove further, that this safe was opened on the night of the mysterious disappearance of the \$100,000. I shall proceed to tell you how it was opened and how it was so effectively sealed shut that for ordinary purposes it would not have been discovered until the bank removed it and bought a new safe.

"A band of several men entered the bank that night. They were equipped with oxyacetylene or oxyhydrogen apparatus. One of the men, skilful in such work, drew a circle of the cut he proposed to make. With his torch he cut a disc in the side of the safe large enough to admit the body of a man. He performed the same operation in the roof of the safe. He beveled the cut so that the disc would not fall from the roof into the safe.

"To answer possible objections, I must assume at once that it would have been easier to cut around the combination, but that would also have cut the tumblers and they could not have been replaced. Having cut two regular holes in the safe, the sum of \$100,000 in notes was taken out and \$10,000 in gold was ignored. The next problem was to seal the two holes shut so as to leave no obvious signs of the robbery.

"The robbers were provided with a quantity of metal. The disc which had been cut in the side of the safe was first set in place. A narrow band of metal was missing where the tool had burned through. With a different kind of torch, the most trained worker of the robbers now proceeded to fuse sufficient new metal to seal the opening into the space which had been cut between the disc of metal and the wall of the safe. If only older methods of welding had been open to the robbers, their plan to conceal the robbery would have

been futile. But by using activated, or atomic hydrogen at the point of fusion or welding, so great a heat was developed that the skilled worker had little difficulty in making a neat job of it. When he had smoothed it off, there was practically no unevenness on the surface of the safe. The paint had been marred, of course, but would such men be baffled by a paint job?

"Now for a moment I must tax your patience with a description of the instrument used for this purpose. It is a welding torch with tungsten electrodes, arranged at an acute angle toward each other. Their distance apart is regulated by pressing a lever set in the handle of the torch. The alternating current from any socket would serve admirably for power. A tube passes through the handle and through this tube flows a stream of hydrogen. This stream of hydrogen passes through the electric arc, and is reduced to atoms. Passing through the arc, it is in the atomic state at the point of welding. Burning again to the molecular state, it generates a heat that will fuse anything. As the reducing action of this atomic hydrogen is so powerful, no carbon, oxygen or nitrogen contamination can occur. The weld can be made as clean and smooth as desired.

"Not to tire you further with occult science, I will simply state then that the inside and outside of the safe were carefully sealed by means of this hydrogen welding apparatus. The workman, who sealed the side of the safe, was then lifted from the interior by his confederates. They could do little with the inside of the safe roof. The outside, however, was sealed up

with care. But who would look for safe-blowing at the roof of the safe?

"If my long explanation leads to the supposition that all this requires much time, Inspector Craven will tell you that with the proper apparatus, the holes could be cut in a few minutes. Welding with atomic hydrogen can be done at the rate of fifty or more feet per hour. While the explanation is involved, the execution takes little time."

Disgust was supreme on Inspector Craven's face as this demonstration ended. So far as he could see, all the doctor had shown was that there was a method by which a hole could be cut in a safe and the hole sealed up again. The doctor seemed to read his thoughts:

"Now that I have shown how this safe could have been robbed, my friend, Inspector Craven, is eager for action. But I am merely a scientific theorist and must indulge my bent into the realm of politics. I thought the Inspector would take the story up from where I ended. I know little of politics, but when several men take so much trouble to hide their handiwork, I reason there must be a correspondingly important motive.

"The only money these robbers took from the safe was \$100,000, which formed part of a \$50,000,000 loan to Molgravia. Holding up any part of the loan, it is true, would be a temporary impediment. But if this robbery were not discovered, a man of honor would be accused of a breach of trust. Suppose the same thing happened in New York and other large cities, where the majority of the loan was distributed? A



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dozen trusted cashiers would be placed in jail, \$50,000,000 would disappear and the Molgravian government would be discredited. Would that be worth a little research into the realms of atomic hydrogen welding?"

The doctor may well be pardoned for the little exultation that appeared in his voice. His reasoning had

been uncanny. But the doctor had ignored one very important factor. The attempt on his automobile should have taught him that men who plot schemes of such magnitude are resourceful and desperate.

"PUT 'em up everybody!"

This command came in curt fierce tones from Frenchy Vergoyne. Not being under arrest and being a very accomplished criminal, he had picked the pockets of Inspector Craven and his two deputies, relieving them of their weapons and their watches. Two of the pistols he now held in his hands. "Now all of you get over there," he commanded. "And keep that skirt in front of you. If anyone makes a move, she will get it first." In all this time since his imprisonment, Roger Bolton had been unable to make one move on his own behalf. And at this critical moment when those who had caused his disgrace seemed to be near capture, a determined and desperate burglar dared to call the woman he loved, a skirt. It was entirely too much for Roger Bolton.

Roger made one fierce lunge at the burglar, precisely as he had been in the habit of charging the line in his college football days. Before Frenchy Vergoyne knew what was happening, Roger struck him like a catapult. He twisted the gun out of Vergoyne's right hand and struck up the other. The trigger fell, but the bullet struck the ceiling. By this time Inspector Craven had gotten into action and Frenchy Vergoyne was seen on the floor, Inspector Craven astride his chest, with gun in hand. Frenchy Vergoyne did not make a move. But in the confusion, Carlino Angulescu, Grant Smith and two other Molgravians dashed through the iron mesh door, which led from the rear of the tellers' cages, closing it as they ran. Not daring to take his eyes off Frenchy, Inspector Craven roared to his men.

"Follow them, round them up before they get out of Houston."

Then he turned to Frenchy.

"Now, Frenchy," he said, with his gun to his prisoner's face, "you or your gang killed one of our men in that New Brunswick robbery. No matter how I kill you, there will be no blame attached to me. All the men on the force will see to that. Tell me where that loot is, or this gun will go off in a few seconds."

"Frenchy did not want to die. In a low voice he told Inspector Craven that the sum of \$100,000 in notes was still intact under constant guard at an address in New York.

"Roger," called the Inspector, "keep this gun trained on Frenchy until I get a report. If he is lying, he won't have long to worry over his troubles."

In a few seconds more Inspector Craven was telephoning a police station near the New York address.

"Clancy," he cried to the lieutenant who answered the telephone, "take the riot car and ten men fully armed to No. — Avenue. You will find the loot from the Castile Bank and Trust Company robbery there, if my information is correct. Phone me at the bank the moment you verify this report."

Within twenty minutes the telephone rang.

"HELLO, Inspector," called Clancy, "we got the money all right. We had to kill a man who tried to shoot us up. We're coming with the dough."

As soon as the inspector had announced this startling piece of news, the entire party, including Mr. Briscoe, joined in a prolonged "Hurrah."

Carlino Angulescu and his companions had doubtless safely gotten to New York. Frenchy Vergoyne, seeing that he was not kept under guard, walked from the room and resumed his journey to Chicago.

"Doctor," said Craven, somewhat repentantly, "I

owe you an apology. I thought you were so fond of science that you had forgotten all about our safe robbery. You didn't mention it but I suppose they painted over the place where they had cut the safe."

"Oh, of course," said the doctor, "that was a small detail. They had to repaint the entire surface of one side of the safe. But with a quick drying paint, that was a simple matter."

"Well," said Mr. Briscoe, "since the money has been recovered and we know now who took it, I think the officers had better release Roger Bolton. We owe him all kinds of amends, but what else could we do?"

When Clancy had arrived with his men and the stolen money, Inspector Craven ordered two to remain on guard until Mr. Briscoe had decided on a proper disposition of the fund.

"Dr. Jarvis," cried Mr. Briscoe, as soon as the money had been counted, found intact and deposited in the large vault in the basement, "the manner in which you solved this intricate robbery is nothing short of marvellous. We have an ample surplus in the bank, and the insurance companies have offered a large reward for the recovery of the stolen notes. The rewards belong to you, certainly."

"Mr. Briscoe," replied the doctor, diffidently, "to me the whole affair was a scientific problem to be solved as such. My entire interest in this affair was due to the confidence Miss Velie had in this young man and her enthusiasm in my ability to help her. I may say that I count Roger Bolton a most fortunate man."

Olive blushed at this announcement, but confirmed the doctor's opinion by pressing Roger's arm, which had been locked in hers for some minutes. Tom Velie, wide awake, said,

"Doc, the police force sure needs you if these burglars are going in for invisible robberies. How you got at the thing without ever coming here, when the police had been over the ground with microscopes, beats me. But you must take dinner with us Sunday and explain what I missed. I am going to offer Roger a better job under my eye, where I can look after my future son-in-law. And he had better set the date pretty soon."

When they were married, Roger insisted that Doctor Jarvis act as best man. Olive blushing insists that their first born, whether boy or girl, shall bear "Jarvis" as a middle name.

The large banks, warned in time, took precautions that effectively prevented any further attack on the Molgravian loan. Inspector Craven was offered a very large reward, which he at first refused to take. But when he found that Doctor Jarvis, who was very well off, would have nothing to do with the reward, he informed the bankers how the method of this robbery had been discovered. With the aid of Tom Velie, they endowed a million dollar laboratory at one of the hospitals, placing a large income at the disposal of the doctor for his experiments and researches.

Carlino Angulescu, it was learned, was none other than the scientist, Serge Malakieff, who had devoted his science to the cause of communism. He wrote Doctor Jarvis that he was prostituting his talents for the benefit of capitalism, a decision he might sometime regret. While the doctor recognized Malakieff's great ability, he shrugged his shoulders at the notion of a threat. At the same time he received an invitation from the Molgravian government, which had heard of his achievement, to address the International Medical Association, which was to meet in the Molgravian capital the following year. He immediately set out for his new laboratory where he decided that a talk on the "Influence of ultra-violet rays on either delicate or fibrous tissues," would be highly interesting to the Molgravians.

WHEN THE SLEEPER WAKES

by *H.G. Wells*

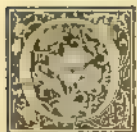
Author of "The Time Machine," "The Island of Dr. Moreau, etc."



He addressed himself now to the unseen multitude. (page 116)

CHAPTER I

Insomnia



NE afternoon, at low water, Mr. Isbister, a young artist lodging at Boscastle, walked from that place to the picturesque cove of Pentargen, desiring to examine the caves there. Halfway down the precipitous path to the Pentargen beach he came suddenly upon a man sitting in an attitude of profound distress beneath a projecting mass of rock. The hands of this man hung limply over his knees, his eyes were red and staring before him, and his face was wet with tears.

He glanced round at Isbister's football. Both men were disconcerted, Isbister the more so, and, to override the awkwardness of his involuntary pause, he remarked, with an air of mature conviction, that the weather was hot for the time of year.

"Very," answered the stranger shortly, hesitated a second, and added in a colorless tone, "I can't sleep."

Isbister stopped abruptly. "No?" was all he said, but his bearing conveyed his helpful impulse.

"It may sound incredible," said the stranger, turning weary eyes to Isbister's face and emphasizing his words with a languid hand, "but I have had no sleep—no sleep at all for six nights."

"Had advice?"

"Yes. Bad advice for the most part. Drugs. My nervous system. . . . They are all very well for the run of people. It's hard to explain. I dare not take . . . sufficiently powerful drugs."

"That makes it difficult," said Isbister.

He stood helplessly in the narrow path, perplexed what to do. Clearly the man wanted to talk. An idea natural enough under the circumstances, prompted him to keep the conversation going. "I've never suffered from sleeplessness myself," he said in a tone of commonplace gossip, "but in those cases I have known, people have usually found something—"

"I dare make no experiments."

He spoke wearily. He gave a gesture of rejection, and for a space both men were silent.

"Exercise?" suggested Isbister diffidently, with a glance from his interlocutor's face of wretchedness to the touring costume he wore.

"That is what I have tried. Unwisely perhaps. I have followed the coast, day after day—from New Quay. It has only added muscular fatigue to the mental. The cause of this unrest was overwork—trouble. There was something—"

He stopped as if from sheer fatigue. He rubbed his forehead with a lean hand. He resumed speech like one who talks to himself.

"I am a lone wolf, a solitary man, wandering through a world in which I have no part. I am wifeless—childless—who is it speaks of the childless as the dead twigs on the tree of life? I am wifeless, childless—I could find no duty to do. No desire even in my heart. One thing at last I set myself to do.

"I said, I *will* do this, and to do it, to overcome the inertia of this dull body, I resorted to drugs. Great God, I've had enough of drugs! I don't know if *you* feel the heavy inconvenience of the body, its exasperating demand of time from the mind—time—life! Live! We only live in patches. We have to eat, and then comes the dull digestive complacencies—or irritations. We have to take the air or else our thoughts grow sluggish, stupid, run into gulfs and blind alleys. A thousand distractions arise from within and without, and then comes drowsiness and sleep. Men seem to live for sleep. How little of a man's day is his own—even at the best! And then come those false friends, those Thug helpers, the alkalis that stifle natural fatigue and kill rest—black coffee, cocaine—"

"I see," said Isbister.

"I did my work," said the sleepless man with a querulous intonation.

"And this is the price?"

"Yes."

For a little while the two remained without speaking.

"You can not imagine the craving for rest that I feel—a hunger and thirst. For six long days, since my work was done, my mind has been a whirlpool, swift, unprogressive and incessant, a torrent of thoughts leading nowhere, spinning round swift and steady—"

He paused. "Towards the gulf."

"You must sleep," said Isbister decisively, and with an air of a remedy discovered. "Certainly you must sleep."

"My mind is perfectly lucid. It was never clearer. But I know I am drawing towards the vortex. Presently—"

"Yes?"

"You have seen things go down an eddy? Out of the light of the day, out of this sweet world of sanity—down—"

"But," expostulated Isbister.

The man threw out a hand towards him, and his eyes were wild, and his voice suddenly high. "I shall kill myself. If in no other way—at the foot of yonder dark precipice there, where the waves are green, and the white surge lifts and falls, and that little thread of water trembles down. There at any rate is . . . sleep."

"That's unreasonable," said Isbister, startled at the man's hysterical gust of emotion. "Drugs are better than that."

"There at any rate is sleep," repeated the stranger, not heeding him.

Isbister looked at him and wondered transitorily if some complex Providence had indeed brought them together that afternoon. "It's not certain, you know," he remarked. "There's a cliff like that at Lulworth Cove—as high, anyhow—and a little girl fell from top to bottom. And lives today—sound and well."

"But those rocks there?"

"One might lie on them rather dismally through a cold night, broken bones grating as one shivered, chill water splashing over you. Eh?"

Their eyes met. "Sorry to upset your ideals," said Isbister with a sense of devil-may-careish brilliance. "But a suicide over that cliff (or any cliff for the matter of that), really, as an artist—" He laughed. It's so damned amateurish."

"But the other thing," said the sleepless man irritably, "the other thing. No man can keep sane if night after night—"

"Have you been walking along this coast alone?"

"Yes."

"Silly sort of thing to do. If you'll excuse my saying so. Alone! As you say; body fag is no cure for brain fag. Who told you to? No wonder; walking! And the sun on your head, heat, fag, solitude, all the day long, and then, I suppose, you go to bed and try very hard—eh?"

Isbister stopped short and looked at the sufferer doubtfully.

"Look at these rocks!" cried the seated man with a sudden force of gesture, "Look at that sea that has shone and quivered there forever! See the white spume rush into darkness under that great cliff. And this blue vault, with the blinding sun pouring from the dome of it. It is your world. You accept it, you rejoice in it. It warms and supports and delights you. And for me—"

He turned his head and showed a ghastly face, blood-shot, pallid eyes and bloodless lips. He spoke almost in a whisper. "It is the garment of my misery. The whole world . . . is the garment of my misery."

Isbister looked at all the wild beauty of the sunlit cliffs about them and back to that face of despair. For a moment he was silent.

He started, and made a gesture of impatient rejection. "You get a night's sleep," he said, "and you won't see much misery out here. Take my word for it."

He was quite sure now that this was a providential

IF one were to ask us for the names of the five greatest scientific stories that have been written so far, one of the five would unquestionably be, "WHEN THE SLEEPER WAKES."

Few stories of the scientific type are as absorbing or grip your imagination with such intensity as does this story. The theme of a man waking up after a 200 year sleep may not be so novel in itself, but under Wells' treatment it certainly becomes the outstanding story of its class of all times. It is crammed full with adventure and surprises and there is hardly a page that does not retain your full interest. While this story was written years ago, before the advent of the aeroplane, it still remains true in practically every way. Mr. Wells not only anticipated the aeroplane and to a good extent, broadcasting, as it has come to pass, but he anticipated many other inventions, some of which we are still ignorant of, though they are certain to be realized. If you want to know what the world will very likely look like 200 years from now, read this masterpiece.

Of added interest is the fact that we have preserved the original illustrations conceived by an English artist which will go far toward a better understanding of the story.

encounter. Only half an hour ago he had been feeling horribly bored. Here was employment the bare thought of which was righteous self-applause. He took possession forthwith. It seemed to him that the first need of this exhausted being was companionship. He flung himself down on the steeply sloping turf beside the motionless seated figure, and deployed forthwith into a skirmishing line of gossip.

His hearer seemed to have lapsed into apathy; he stared dismally seaward, and spoke only in answer to Isbister's direct questions—and not to all of those. But he made no sign of objection to this benevolent intrusion upon his despair.

In a helpless way he seemed even grateful, and when presently Isbister, feeling that his unsupported talk was losing vigour, suggested that they should reascend the steep and return towards Boscastle, alleging the view into Blackapit, he submitted quietly. Halfway up he began talking to himself, and abruptly turned a ghastly face on his helper. "What can be happening?" he asked with a gaunt illustrative hand. "What can be happening? Spin, spin, spin, spin. It goes round and round, round and round for evermore."

He stood with his hand circling.

"It's all right, old chap," said Isbister with the air of an old friend. "Don't worry yourself. Trust to me."

THE man dropped his hand and turned again. They went over the brow in single file and to the headland beyond Penally with the sleepless man gesticulating ever and again, and speaking fragmentary things concerning his whirling brain. At the headland they stood for a space by the seat that looks into the dark mysteries of Blackapit, and then he sat down. Isbister had resumed his talk whenever the path had widened sufficiently for them to walk abreast. He was enlarging upon the complex difficulty of making Boscastle Harbour in bad weather, when suddenly and quite irrelevantly his companion interrupted him again.

"My head is not like what it was," he said, gesticulating for want of expressive phrases. "It's not like what it was. There is a sort of oppression, a weight. No—not drowsiness, would God it were! It is like a shadow, a deep shadow falling suddenly and swiftly across something busy. Spin, spin into the darkness. The tumult of thought, the confusion, the eddy and eddy. I can't express it. I can hardly keep my mind on it—steadily enough to tell you."

He stopped feebly.

"Don't trouble, old chap," said Isbister. "I think I can understand. At any rate, it doesn't matter very much just at present about telling me, you know."

The sleepless man thrust his knuckles into his eyes and rubbed them. Isbister talked for awhile while this rubbing continued, and then he had a fresh idea. "Come down to my room," he said, "and try a pipe. I can show you some sketches of this Blackapit. If you'd care?"

The other rose obediently and followed him down the steep.

Several times Isbister heard him stumble as they came down, and his movements were slow and hesitating. "Come in with me," said Isbister, "and try some cigarettes and the blessed gift of alcohol. If you take alcohol?"

The stranger hesitated at the garden gate. He seemed no longer clearly aware of his actions. "I don't drink," he said slowly, coming up the garden path, and after a moment's interval repeated absently, "No—I don't drink. It goes round. Spin, it goes—spin—"

He stumbled at the doorstep and entered the room with the bearing of one who sees nothing.

Then he sat down abruptly and heavily in the easy

chair, seemed almost to fall into it. He leant forward with his brows on his hands and became motionless.

Presently he made a faint sound in his throat. Isbister moved about the room with the nervousness of an inexperienced host, making little remarks that scarcely required answering. He crossed the room to his portfolio, placed it on the table and noticed the mantel clock.

"I don't know if you'd care to have supper with me," he said with an unlighted cigarette in his hand—his mind troubled with a design of the furtive administration of chloral. "Only cold mutton, you know, but passing sweet. Welsh. And a tart, I believe." He repeated this after momentary silence.

The seated man made no answer. Isbister stopped, match in hand, regarding him.

The stillness lengthened. The match went out, the cigarette was put down unlit. The man was certainly very still. Isbister took up the portfolio, opened it, put it down, hesitated, seemed about to speak. "Perhaps," he whispered doubtfully. Presently he glanced at the door and back to the figure. Then he stole on tiptoe out of the room, glancing at his companion after each elaborate pace.

He closed the door noiselessly. The house door was standing open, and he went out beyond the porch, and stood where the monkshood rose at the corner of the garden bed. From this point he could see the stranger through the open window, still and dim, sitting head on hand. He had not moved.

A number of children going along the road stopped and regarded the artist curiously. A boatman exchanged civilities with him. He felt that possibly his circumspect attitude and position seemed peculiar and unaccountable. Smoking, perhaps, might seem more natural. He drew pipe and pouch from his pocket, filled the pipe slowly.

"I wonder," . . . he said, with a scarcely perceptible loss of complacency. "At any rate one must give him a chance." He struck a match in the virile way, and proceeded to light his pipe.

Presently he heard his landlady behind him, coming with his lamp lit from the kitchen. He turned, gesticulating with his pipe, and stopped her at the door of his sitting-room. He had some difficulty in explaining the situation in whispers, for she did not know he had a visitor. She retreated again with the lamp, still a little mystified to judge from her manner, and he resumed his hovering at the corner of the porch, flushed and less at his ease.

Long after he had smoked out his pipe, and when the bats were abroad, his curiosity dominated his complex hesitations, and he stole back into his darkling sitting-room. He paused in the doorway. The stranger was still in the same attitude, dark against the window. Save for the singing of some sailors aboard one of the little slate-carrying ships in the harbour, the evening was very still. Outside, the spikes of monkshood and delphinium stood erect and motionless against the shadow of the hillside. Something flashed into Isbister's mind; he started, and leaning over the table, listened. An unpleasant suspicion grew stronger; became conviction. Astonishment seized him and became—dread!

No sound of breathing came from the seated figure!

He crept slowly and noiselessly round the table, pausing twice to listen. At last he could lay his hand on the back of the armchair. He bent down until the two heads were ear to ear.

Then he bent still lower to look up at his visitor's face. He started violently and uttered an exclamation. The eyes were void spaces of white.

He looked again and saw that they were open and with pupils rolled under the lids. He was suddenly afraid. Overcome by the strangeness of the man's con-



It is either death or a fit.

dition, he took him by the shoulder and shook him. "Are you asleep?" he said, with his voice jumping into alto, and again, "Are you asleep?"

A conviction took possession of his mind that this man was dead. He suddenly became active and noisy, strode across the room, blundering against the table as he did so, and rang the bell.

"Please bring a light at once," he said in the passage. "There is something wrong with my friend."

Then he returned to the motionless seated figure, grasped the shoulder, shook it, and shouted. The room was flooded with yellow glare as his astonished landlady entered with the light. His face was white as he turned blinking towards her. "I must fetch a doctor at once," he said. "It is either death or a fit. Is there a doctor in the village? Where is a doctor to be found?"

CHAPTER II

The Trance

THE state of cataleptic rigour into which this man had fallen, lasted for an unprecedented length of time, and then he passed slowly to the flaccid state, to a lax attitude suggestive of profound repose. Then it was his eyes could be closed.

He was removed from the hotel to the Boscastle surgery, and from the surgery, after some weeks, to London. But he still resisted every attempt at reanimation. After a time, for reasons that will appear later, these attempts were discontinued. For a great space he lay in that strange condition, inert and still—neither dead nor living but, as it were, suspended, hanging midway between nothingness and existence. His was a darkness unbroken by a ray of thought or sensation, a dreamless inanimation, a vast space of peace. The tumult of his mind had swelled and risen to an abrupt climax of

silence. Where was the man? Where is any man when insensibility takes hold of him?

"It seems only yesterday," said Isbister. "I remember it all as though it happened yesterday—clearer perhaps, than if it had happened yesterday."

It was the Isbister of the last chapter, but he was no longer a young man. The hair that had been brown and a trifle in excess of the fashionable length, was iron grey and clipped close, and the face that had been pink and white was buff and ruddy. He had a pointed beard shot with grey. He talked to an elderly man who wore a summer suit of drill (the summer of that year was unusually hot). This was Warming, a London solicitor, and next of kin to Graham the man who had fallen into the trance. And the two men stood side by side in a room in a house in London regarding his recumbent figure.

It was a yellow figure lying lax upon a water-bed and clad in a flowing shirt, a figure with a shrunken face and a stubby beard, lean limbs and lank nails, and about it was a case of thin glass. This glass seemed to mark off the sleeper from the reality of life about him, he was a thing apart, a strange, isolated abnormality. The two men stood close to the glass, peering in.

"The thing gave me a shock," said Isbister. "I feel a queer sort of surprise even now when I think of his white eyes. They were white, you know, rolled up. Coming here again brings it all back to me."

"Have you never seen him since that time?" asked Warming.

"Often wanted to come," said Isbister; "but business nowadays is too serious a thing for much holiday keeping. I've been in America most of the time."

"If I remember rightly," said Warming, "you were an artist?"

"Was. And then I became a married man. I saw it was all up with black and white, very soon—at least for a mediocre man; I jumped on to process. Those posters on the Cliffs at Dover are by my people."

"Good posters," admitted the solicitor, "though I was sorry to see them there."

"Last as long as the cliffs, if necessary," exclaimed Isbister with satisfaction. "The world changes. When he fell asleep, twenty years ago, I was down at Boscastle with a box of water-colors and a noble, old-fashioned ambition. I didn't expect that some day my pigments would glorify the whole blessed coast of England, from Land's End round again to the Lizard. Luck comes to a man very often when he's not looking."

Warming seemed to doubt the quality of the luck. "I just missed seeing you if I recollect aright."

"You came back by the trap that took me to Camel-ford railway station. It was close on the Jubilee, Victoria's Jubilee, because I remember the seats and flags in Westminster, and the row with the cabman at Chelsea."

"The Diamond Jubilee, it was," said Warming; "the second one."

"Ah, yes! At the proper Jubilee—the Fifty Year affair—I was down at Wookey—a boy. I missed all that. . . . What a fuss we had with him! My landlady wouldn't take him in, wouldn't let him stay—he looked so queer when he was rigid. We had to carry him in a chair up to the hotel. And the Boscastle doctor—it wasn't the present chap, but the G. P. before him—was at him until nearly two, with me and the landlord holding lights and so forth."

"It was a cataleptic rigour at first, wasn't it?"

"Stiff!—wherever you bent him he stuck. You might have stood him on his head and he'd have stopped. I never saw such stiffness. Of course this"—he indicated the prostrate figure by a movement of his head—"is quite different. And, of course, the little doctor—what was his name?"

"Smithers?"

"Smithers it was—was quite wrong in trying to fetch him round too soon, according to all accounts. The things he did. Even now it makes me feel all—ugh! Mustard, snuff, pricking. And one of those beastly little things, not dynamos—"

"Induction coils."

"Yes. You could see his muscles throb and jump, and he twisted about. There was just two flaring yellow candles, and all the shadows were shivering, and the little doctor nervous and putting on side, and *him*—stark and squirming in the most unnatural ways. Well, it made me dream."

Pause.

"It's a strange state," said Warming.

"It's a sort of complete absence," said Isbister. "Here's the body, empty. Not dead a bit, and yet not alive. It's like a seat vacant and marked 'engaged.' No feeling, no digestion, no beating of the heart—not a flutter. That doesn't make me feel as if there was a man present. In a sense it's more dead than death, for these doctors tell me that even the hair has stopped growing. Now with the proper dead, the hair will go on growing—"

"I know," said Warming, with a flash of pain in his expression.

THEY peered through the glass again. Graham was indeed in a strange state, in the flaccid phase of a trance, but a trance unprecedented in medical history. Trances had lasted for as much as a year before—but at the end of that time it had ever been a waking or a death; sometimes first one and then the other. Isbister noted the marks the physicians had made in injecting nourishment, for that device had been resorted to to postpone collapse; he pointed them out to Warming, who had been trying not to see them.

"And while he has been lying here," said Isbister, with the zest of a life freely spent, "I have changed my plans in life; married, raised a family, my eldest lad—I hadn't begun to think of sons then—is an American citizen, and looking forward to leaving Harvard. There's a touch of grey in my hair. And this man, not a day older nor wiser (practically) than I was in my 'downy days. It's curious to think of."

Warming turned. "And I have grown old too. I played cricket with him when I was still only a lad. And he looks a young man still. Yellow perhaps. But that is a young man nevertheless."

"And there's been the War," said Isbister.

"From beginning to end."

"And these Martians."

"I've understood," said Isbister after a pause, "that he had some moderate property of his own?"

"That is so," said Warming. He coughed primly. "As it happens—I have charge of it."

"Ah!" Isbister thought, hesitated and spoke: "No doubt—his keep here is not expensive—no doubt it will have improved—accumulated?"

"It has. He will wake up very much better off—if he wakes—than when he slept."

"As a business man," said Isbister, "that thought has naturally been in my mind. I have, indeed, sometimes thought that, speaking commercially, of course, this sleep may be a very good thing for him. That he knows what he is about, so to speak, in being insensible so long. If he had lived straight on—"

"I doubt if he would have premeditated as much," said Warming. "He was not a far-sighted man. In fact—"

"Yes?"

"We differed on that point. I stood to him somewhat in the relation of a guardian. You have probably seen enough of affairs to recognize that occasionally a certain friction—. But even if that was the case, there is a doubt whether he will ever wake. This sleep exhausts slowly, but it exhausts. Apparently he is slid-

ing slowly, very slowly and tediously, down a long slope, if you can understand me?"

"It will be a pity to lose his surprise. There's been a lot of change these twenty years. It's Rip Van Winkle come real."

"It's Bellamy," said Warming. "There has been a lot of change certainly. And, among other changes, I have changed. I am an old man."

Isbister hesitated, and then feigned a belated surprise. "I shouldn't have thought it."

"I was forty-three when his bankers—you remember you wired to his bankers—sent on to me."

"I got their address from the cheque book in his pocket," said Isbister.

"Well, the addition is not difficult," said Warming.

There was another pause, and then Isbister gave way to an unavoidable curiosity. "He may go on for years yet," he said, and had a moment of hesitation. "We have to consider that. His affairs, you know, may fall some day into the hands of—someone else, you know."

"That, if you will believe me, Mr. Isbister, is one of the problems most constantly before my mind. We happen to be—as a matter of fact, there are no very trustworthy connections of ours. It is a grotesque and unprecedented position."

"It is," said Isbister. "As a matter of fact, it's a case for a public trustee, if only we had such a functionary."

"It seems to me it's a case for some public body, some practically undying guardian. If he really is going on living—as the doctors, some of them, think. As a matter of fact, I have gone to one or two public men about it. But, so far, nothing has been done."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea to hand him over to some public body—the British Museum Trustees, or the Royal College of Physicians. Sounds a bit odd, of course, but the whole situation is odd."

"The difficulty is to induce them to take him."

"Red tape, I suppose?"

"Partly."

Pause. "It's a curious business, certainly," said Isbister. "And compound interest has a way of mounting up."

"It has," said Warming. "And now the gold supplies are running short there is a tendency towards . . . appreciation."

"I've felt that," said Isbister with a grimace. "But it makes it better for *him*."

"If he wakes."

"If he wakes," echoed Isbister. "Do you notice the pinched-in look of his nose, and the way in which his eyelids sink?"

Warming looked and thought for a space. "I doubt if he will wake," he said at last.

"I never properly understood," said Isbister, "what it was brought this on. He told me something about overstudy. I've often been curious."

"He was a man of considerable gifts, but spasmodic, emotional. He had grave domestic troubles, divorced his wife, in fact, and it was as a relief from that, I think, that he took up politics of the rabid sort. He was a fanatical Radical—a Socialist—or typical Liberal, as they used to call themselves, of the advanced school. Energetic—flighty—undisciplined. Overwork upon a controversy did this for him. I remember the pamphlet he wrote—a curious production. Wild, whirling stuff. There were one or two prophecies. Some of them are already exploded, some of them are established facts. But for the most part to read such a thesis is to realize how full the world is of unanticipated things. He will have much to learn, much to unlearn, when he wakes. If ever a waking comes."

"I'd give anything to be there," said Isbister, "just to hear what he would say to it all."

"So would I," said Warming. "Aye! so would I," with an old man's sudden turn to self pity. "But I shall never see him wake."

He stood looking thoughtfully at the waxen figure. "He will never wake," he said at last. He sighed. "He will never wake again."

CHAPTER III The Awakening

BUT Warming was wrong in that. An awakening came.

What a wonderfully complex thing! this simple seeming unity—the self! Who can trace its reintegration as morning after morning we awaken, the flux and confluence of its countless factors interweaving, rebuilding, the dim first stirrings of the soul, the growth and synthesis of the unconscious to the sub-conscious, the sub-conscious to dawning consciousness, until at last we recognize ourselves again. And as it happens to most of us after the night's sleep so it was with Graham at the end of his vast slumber. A dim cloud of sensation taking shape, a cloudy dreariness and he found himself vaguely somewhere, recumbent, faint, but alive.

The pilgrimage towards a personal being seemed to traverse vast gulfs, to occupy epochs. Gigantic dreams that were terrible realities at the time, left vague perplexing memories, strange creatures, strange scenery, as if from another planet. There was a distinct impression, too, of a momentous conversation, of a name—he could not tell what name—that was subsequently to recur, of some queer long-forgotten sensation of vein and muscle, of a feeling of vast hopeless effort, the effort of a man near drowning in darkness. Then came a panorama of dazzling unstable confluent scenes.

Graham became aware his eyes were open and regarding some unfamiliar thing.

It was something white, the edge of something, a frame of wood. He moved his head slightly, following the contour of this shape. It went up beyond the top of his eyes. He tried to think where he might be. Did it matter, seeing he was so wretched? The color of his thoughts was a dark depression. He felt the featureless misery of one who wakes towards the hour of dawn. He had an uncertain sense of whispers and footsteps hastily receding.

The movement of his head involved a perception of extreme physical weakness. He supposed he was in bed in the hotel at the place in the valley—but he could not recall that white edge. He must have slept. He remembered now that he had wanted to sleep. He recalled the cliff and waterfall again and then recollected something about talking to a passer-by. . . .

How long had he slept? What was that sound of pattering feet? And that rise and fall, like the murmur of breakers on pebbles? He put out a languid hand to reach his watch from the chair whereon it was his habit to place it, and touched some smooth, hard surface like glass. This was so unexpected that it startled him extremely. Quite suddenly he rolled over, stared for a moment, and struggled into a sitting position. The effort was unexpectedly difficult, and it left him giddy and weak—and amazed.

He rubbed his eyes. The riddle of his surroundings was confusing but his mind was quite clear—evidently his sleep had benefitted him. He was not in a bed at all as he understood the word but lying naked on a very soft and yielding mattress in a trough of dark glass. The mattress was partly transparent, a fact he observed with a strange sense of insecurity, and below it was a mirror reflecting him greyly. About his arm—and he saw with a shock that his skin was strangely dry and yellow—was bound a curious apparatus of rubber, bound so cunningly that it seemed to pass into his skin above and below. And

this strange bed was placed in a case of greenish colored glass (as it seemed to him) a bar in the white framework of which had first arrested his attention. In the corner of the case was a stand of glittering and delicately made apparatus, for the most part quite strange appliances, though a maximum and minimum thermometer was recognizable.

The slightly greenish tint of the glass-like substance which surrounded him on every hand obscured what lay behind but he perceived it was a vast apartment of splendid appearance, and with a very large and simple white archway facing him. Close to the walls of the cage were articles of furniture, a table covered with a silvery cloth, silvery like the side of a fish, a couple of graceful chairs, and on the table a number of dishes with substances piled on them, a bottle and two glasses. He realized that he was intensely hungry.

He could see no human being, and after a period of hesitation scrambled off the translucent mattress and tried to stand on the clean, white floor of his little apartment. He had miscalculated his strength, however, and staggered and put his hand against the glass-like pane before him to steady himself. For a moment it resisted his hand, bending outward like a distended bladder, then it broke with a slight report and vanished—a pricked bubble. He reeled out into the general space of the hall, greatly astonished. He caught at the table to save himself, knocking one of the glasses to the floor—it rang but did not break—and sat down in one of the arm-chairs.

When he had a little recovered he filled the remaining glass from the bottle and drank—a colorless liquid it was, but not water, with a pleasing faint aroma and taste and a quality of immediate support and stimulus. He put down the vessel and looked about him.

The apartment lost none of its size and magnificence now that the greenish transparency that had intervened was removed. The archway he saw led to a flight of steps, going downward without the intermediation of a door, to a spacious transverse passage. This passage ran between polished pillars of some white-veined substance of deep ultramarine, and along it came the sound of human movements and voices and a deep undeviating droning note. He sat, now fully awake, listening alertly, forgetting the viands in his attention.

Then with a shock he remembered that he was naked, and casting about him for covering, saw a long black robe thrown on one of the chairs beside him. This he wrapped about him and sat down again, trembling.

His mind was still a surging perplexity. Clearly he had slept, and had been removed in his sleep. But where? And who were those people, the distant crowd beyond the deep blue pillars? Boscastle? He poured out and partially drank another glass of the colorless fluid.

What was this place?—this place that to his senses seemed subtly quivering like a thing alive? He looked about him at the clean and beautiful form of the apartment, unstained by ornament, and saw that the roof was broken in one place by a circular shaft full of light, and, as he looked, a steady, sweeping shadow blotted it out and passed, and came again and passed. "Beat, beat," that sweeping shadow had a note of its own in the subdued tumult that filled the air.

He would have called out, but only a little sound came into his throat. Then he stood up, and, with the uncertain steps of a drunkard, made his way towards the archway. He staggered down the steps, tripped on the corner of the black cloak he had wrapped about himself, and saved himself by catching at one of the blue pillars.

The passage ran down a cool vista of blue and purple, and ended remotely in a railed space like a balcony, brightly lit and projecting into a space of haze, a space like the interior of some gigantic building. Beyond and remote were vast and vague architectural forms. The

tumult of voices rose now loud and clear, and on the balcony and with their backs to him, gesticulating and apparently in animated conversation, were three figures, richly dressed in loose and easy garments of bright soft colorings. The noise of a great multitude of people poured up over the balcony, and once it seemed the top of a banner passed, and once some brightly colored object, a pale blue cap or garment thrown up into the air perhaps, flashed athwart the space and fell. The shouts sounded like English, there was a reiteration of "Wake!" He heard some indistinct shrill cry, and abruptly these three men began laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed one—a red-haired man in a short purple robe. "When the Sleeper wakes—*When!*"

He turned his eyes full of merriment along the passage. His face changed, the whole man changed, became rigid. The other two turned swiftly at his exclamation and stood motionless. Their faces assumed an expression of consternation, an expression that deepened into awe.

Suddenly Graham's knees bent beneath him, his arm against the pillar collapsed limply, he staggered forward and fell upon his face.

CHAPTER IV

The Sound of a Tumult

GRAHAM'S last impression before he fainted was of a clamorous ringing of bells. He learnt afterwards that he was insensible, hanging between life and death, for the better part of an hour. When he recovered his senses, he was back on his translucent couch, and there was a stirring warmth at heart and throat. The dark apparatus, he perceived, had been removed from his arm, which was bandaged. The white framework was still about him, but the greenish transparent substance that had filled it was altogether gone. A man in a deep violet robe, one of those who had been on the balcony, was looking keenly into his face.

Remote but insistent was a clamor of bells and confused sounds, that suggested to his mind the picture of a great number of people shouting together. Something seemed to fall across this tumult, a door suddenly closed.

Graham moved his head. "What does this all mean?" he said slowly. "Where am I?"

He saw the red-haired man who had been first to discover him. A voice seemed to be asking what he had said, and was abruptly stilled.

The man in violet answered in a soft voice, speaking English with a slightly foreign accent, or so at least it seemed to the Sleeper's ears, "You are quite safe. You were brought hither from where you fell asleep. It is quite safe. You have been here some time—sleeping. In a trance."

He said something further that Graham could not hear, and a little phial was handed across to him. Graham felt a cooling spray, a fragrant mist played over his forehead for a moment, and his sense of refreshment increased. He closed his eyes in satisfaction.

"Better?" asked the man in violet as Graham's eyes reopened. He was a pleasant-faced man of thirty, perhaps, with a pointed flaxen beard, and a clasp of gold at the neck of his violet robe.

"Yes," said Graham.

"You have been asleep some time. In a cataleptic trance. You have heard? Catalepsy? It may seem strange to you at first, but I can assure you everything is well."

Graham did not answer, but these words served their reassuring purpose. His eyes went from face to face of the three people about him. They were regarding him strangely. He knew he ought to be somewhere in Cornwall, but he could not square these things with that impression.

A matter that had been in his mind during his last waking moments at Boscastle recurred, a thing resolved upon and somehow neglected. He cleared his throat.

"Have you wired my cousin?" he asked. "E. Warming, 27, Chancery Lane?"

They were all assiduous to hear. But he had to repeat it. "What an odd blurr in his accent!" whispered the red-haired man. "Wire, sir?" said the young man with the flaxen beard, evidently puzzled.

"He means send an electric telegram," volunteered the third, a pleasant-faced youth of nineteen or twenty. The flaxen-bearded man gave a cry of comprehension. "How stupid of me! You may be sure everything shall be done, sir," he said to Graham. "I am afraid it would be difficult to—*wire* to your cousin. He is not in London now. But don't trouble about arrangements yet; you have been asleep a very long time and the important thing is to get over that, sir." (Graham concluded the word was *sir*, but this man pronounced it "*Sire*.")

"Oh!" said Graham, and became quiet.

It was all very puzzling, but apparently these people in unfamiliar dress knew what they were about. Yet they were odd and the room was odd. It seemed he was in some newly established place. He had a sudden flash of suspicion. Surely this wasn't some hall of public exhibition! If it was he would give Warming a piece of his mind. But it scarcely had that character. And in a place of public exhibition he would not have discovered himself naked.

Then suddenly, quite abruptly, he realised what had happened. There was no perceptible interval of suspicion, no dawn to his knowledge. Abruptly he knew that his trance had lasted for a vast interval; as if by some processes of thought reading he interpreted the awe in the faces that peered into his. He looked at them strangely, full of intense emotion. It seemed they read his eyes. He framed his lips to speak and could not. A queer impulse to hide his knowledge came into his mind almost at the moment of his discovery. He looked at his bare feet, regarding them silently. His impulse to speak passed. He was trembling exceedingly.

They gave him some pink fluid with a greenish fluorescence and a meaty taste and the assurance of returning strength grew.

"That—that makes me feel better," he said hoarsely, and there were murmurs of respectful approval. He knew now quite clearly. He made to speak again, and again he could not.

He pressed his throat and tried a third time. "How long?" he asked in a level voice. "How long have I been asleep?"

"Some considerable time," said the flaxen-bearded man, glancing quickly at the others.

"How long?"

"A very long time."

"Yes—yes," said Graham, suddenly testy. "But I want—Is it—it is—some years? Many years? There was something—I forget what. I feel—confused. But you—" He sobbed. "You need not fence with me. How long—?"

He stopped, breathing irregularly. He squeezed his eyes with his knuckles and sat waiting for an answer.

They spoke in undertones.

"Five or six?" he asked faintly. "More?"

"Very much more than that."

"More!"

"More."

He looked at them and it seemed as though imps were twitching the muscles of his face. He looked his question.

"Many years," said the man with the red beard.

Graham struggled into a sitting position. He wiped a rheumy tear from his face with a lean hand. "Many years!" he repeated. He shut his eyes tight, opened them, and sat looking about him from one unfamiliar thing to another.

"How many years?" he asked.

"You must be prepared to be surprised."

"Well?"

"More than a gross of years."

He was irritated at the strange word. "More than a *what*?"

Two of them spoke together. Some quick remarks that were made about "decimal" he did not catch.

"How long did you say?" asked Graham. "How long? Don't look like that. Tell me."

Among the remarks in an undertone, his ear caught six words: "More than a couple of centuries."

"What?" he cried, turning on the youth who he thought had spoken. "Who says—? What was that? A couple of centuries!"

"Yes," said the man with the red beard. "Two hundred years."

Graham repeated the words. He had been prepared to hear of a vast repose, and yet these concrete centuries defeated him.

"Two hundred years," he said again, with the figure of a great gulf opening very slowly in his mind; and then, "Oh, but—!"

They said nothing.

"You—did you say—?"

"Two hundred years. Two centuries of years," said the man with the red beard.

There was a pause. Graham looked at their faces and saw that what he had heard was indeed true.

"But it can't be," he said querulously. "I am dreaming. Trances. Trances don't last. That is not right—this is a joke you have played upon me! Tell me—some days ago, perhaps, I was walking along the coast of Cornwall—?"

His voice failed him.

The man with the flaxen beard hesitated. "I'm not very strong in history, sir," he said weakly, and glanced at the others.

"That was it, sir," said the youngster. "Boscastle, in the old Duchy of Cornwall—it's in the southwest country beyond the dairy meadows. There is a house there still. I have been there."

"Boscastle!" Graham turned his eyes to the youngster. "That was it—Boscastle. Little Boscastle. I fell asleep—somewhere there. I don't exactly remember. I don't exactly remember."

He pressed his brows and whispered, "More than *two hundred years*!"

He began to speak quickly with a twitching face, but his heart was cold within him. "But if it is two hundred years, every soul I know, every human being that ever I saw or spoke to before I went to sleep, must be dead."

They did not answer him.

"The Queen and the Royal Family, her Ministers, Church and State. High and low, rich and poor, one with another—"

"Is there England still?"

"That's a comfort! Is there London?"

"This *is* London, eh? And you are my assistant-custodian; assistant-custodian. And these—? Eh? Assistant-custodians too!"

He sat with a gaunt stare on his face. "But why am I here? No! Don't talk. Be quiet. Let me—"

HE SAT silent, rubbed his eyes, and, uncovering them, found another little glass of pinkish fluid held towards him. He took the dose. It was almost immediately sustaining. Directly he had taken it he began to weep naturally and refreshingly.

Presently he looked at their faces, suddenly laughed through his tears, a little foolishly. "But—two—hundred—years!" he said. He grimaced hysterically and covered up his face again.

After a space he grew calm. He sat up, his hands

hanging over his knees in almost precisely the same attitude in which Isbister had found him on the cliff at Pentargen. His attention was attracted by a thick domineering voice, the footsteps of an advancing personage. "What are you doing? Why, was I not warned? Surely you could tell? Someone will suffer for this. The man must be kept quiet. Are the doorways closed? All the doorways? He must be kept perfectly quiet. He must not be told. Has he been told anything?"

The man with the fair beard made some inaudible remark, and Graham, looking over his shoulder, saw approaching a very short, fat, and thickset beardless man, with aquiline nose and heavy neck and chin. Very thick, black and slightly sloping eyebrows that almost met over his nose and overhung deep grey eyes, gave his face an oddly formidable expression. He scowled momentarily at Graham and then his regard returned to the man with the flaxen beard. "These others," he said in a voice of extreme irritation. "You had better go."

"Go?" said the red-bearded man.

"Certainly—go now. But see the doorways are closed as you go."

The two men addressed turned obediently, after one reluctant glance at Graham, and instead of going through the archway as he expected, walked straight to the dead wall of the apartment opposite the archway. And then came a strange thing; a long strip of this apparently solid wall rolled up with a snap, hung over the two retreating men and fell again, and immediately Graham was alone with the newcomer and the purple-robed man with the flaxen beard.

For a space the thickset man took not the slightest notice of Graham, but proceeded to interrogate the other—obviously his subordinate—upon the treatment of their charge. He spoke clearly, but in phrases only partially intelligible to Graham. The awakening seemed not only a matter of surprise but of consternation and annoyance to him. He was evidently profoundly excited.

"You must not confuse his mind by telling him things," he repeated again and again. "You must not confuse his mind."

His questions answered, he turned quickly and eyed the awakened sleeper with an ambiguous expression.

"Feel queer?" he asked.

"Very."

"The world, what you see of it, seems strange to you?"

"I suppose I have to live in it, strange as it seems."

"I suppose so, now."

"In the first place, hadn't I better have some clothes?"

"They—" said the thickset man and stopped, and the flaxen-bearded man met his eye and went away. "You will very speedily have clothes," said the thickset man.

"Is it true indeed, that I have been asleep two hundred—?" asked Graham.

"They have told you that, have they? Two hundred and three, as a matter of fact."

Graham accepted the indisputable now with raised eyebrows and depressed mouth. He sat silent for a moment, and then asked a question, "Is there a mill or dynamo near here?" He did not wait for an answer. "Things have changed tremendously, I suppose?" he said.

"What is that shouting?" he asked abruptly.

"Nothing," said the thickset man impatiently. "It's people. You'll understand better later—perhaps. As you say, things have changed." He spoke shortly, his brows were knit, and he glanced about him like a man trying to decide in an emergency. "We must get you clothes and so forth, at any rate. Better wait here until some can come. No one will come near you. You want shaving."

Graham rubbed his chin.

The man with the flaxen beard came back towards them, turned suddenly, listened for a moment, lifted his eyebrows at the older man, and hurried off through the

archway towards the balcony. The tumult of shouting grew louder, and the thickset man turned and listened also. He cursed suddenly under his breath, and turned his eyes upon Graham with an unfriendly expression. It was a surge of many voices, rising and falling, shouting and screaming, and once came a sound like blows and sharp cries, and then a snapping like the crackling of dry sticks. Graham strained his ears to draw some single thread of sound from the woven tumult.

Then he perceived, repeated again and again, a certain formula. For a time he doubted his ears. But surely these were the words: "Show us the Sleeper! Show us the Sleeper!"

The thickset man rushed suddenly to the archway.

"Wild!" he cried, "How do they know? Do they know? Or is it guessing?"

There was perhaps an answer.

"I can't come," said the thickset man; "I have *him* to see to. But shout from the balcony."

There was an inaudible reply.

"Say he is not awake. Anything! I leave it to you."

He came hurrying back to Graham. "You must have clothes at once," he said. "You cannot stop here—and it will be impossible to—"

He rushed away, Graham shouting unanswered questions after him. In a moment he was back.

"I can't tell you what is happening. It is too complex to explain. In a moment you shall have your clothes made. Yes—in a moment. And then I can take you away from here. You will find out our troubles soon enough."

"But those voices. They were shouting—?"

"Something about the Sleeper—that's you. They have some twisted idea. I don't know what it is. I know nothing."

A shrill bell jettied acutely across the indistinct mingling of remote noises, and this brusque person sprang to a little group of appliances in the corner of the room. He listened for a moment, regarding a ball of crystal, nodded, and said a few indistinct words; then he walked to the wall through which the two men had vanished. It rolled up again like a curtain, and he stood waiting.

Graham lifted his arm and was astonished to find what strength the restoratives had given him. He thrust one leg over the side of the couch and then the other. His head no longer swam. He could scarcely credit his rapid recovery. He sat feeling his limbs.

The man with the flaxen beard re-entered from the archway, and as he did so the cage of a lift came sliding down in front of the thickset man, and a lean, grey-bearded man, carrying a roll, and wearing a tightly-fitting costume of dark green, appeared therein.

"This is the tailor," said the thickset man with an introductory gesture. "It will never do for you to wear that black. I cannot understand how it got here. But I shall. I shall. You will be as rapid as possible?" he said to the tailor.

The man in green bowed, and, advancing, seated himself by Graham on the bed. His manner was calm, but his eyes were full of curiosity. "You will find the fashions altered, Sire," he said. He glanced from under his brows at the thickset man.

HE OPENED the roller with a quick movement, and a confusion of brilliant fabrics poured out over his knees. "You lived, Sire, in a period essentially cylindrical—the Victorian. With a tendency to the hemisphere in hats. Circular curves always. Now—" He flicked out a little appliance the size and appearance of a keyless watch, whirled the knob, and behold—a little figure in white appeared kinetoscope fashion on the dial, walking and turning. The tailor caught up a pattern of bluish white satin. "That is my conception of your immediate treatment," he said

The thickset man came and stood by the shoulder of Graham.

"We have very little time," he said.

"Trust me," said the tailor. "My machine follows. What do you think of this?"

"What is that?" asked the man from the nineteenth century.

"In your days they showed you a fashion-plate," said the tailor, "but this is our modern development. See here." The little figure repeated its revolutions but in a different costume. "Or this," and with a click another small figure in a more voluminous type of robe marched on to the dial. The tailor was very quick in his movements, and glanced twice towards the lift as he did these things.

It rumbled again, and a crop-haired anaemic lad with features of the Chinese type, clad in coarse pale blue canvas, appeared together with a complicated machine, which he pushed noiselessly on little castors into the room. Incontinently the little kinetoscope was dropped, Graham was invited to stand in front of the machine and the tailor muttered some instructions to the crop-haired lad, who answered in guttural tones and with words Graham did not recognize. The boy then went to conduct an incomprehensible monologue in the corner, and the tailor pulled out a number of slotted arms terminating in little discs, pulling them out until the discs were flat against the body of Graham, one at each shoulder blade, one at the elbows one at the neck and so forth, so that at last there were, perhaps, two score of them upon his body and limbs. At the same time, some other person entered the room by the lift behind Graham. The tailor set moving a mechanism that initiated a faint-sounding rhythmic movement of parts in the machine, and in another moment he was knocking up the levers and Graham was released. The tailor replaced his cloak of black, and the man with the flaxen beard proffered him a little glass of some refreshing fluid. Graham saw over the rim of the glass a pale-faced young man regarding him with a singular fixity.

The thickset man had been pacing the room fretfully, and now turned and went through the archway towards the balcony from which the noise of a distant crowd still came in gusts and cadences. The crop-headed lad handed the tailor a roll of the bluish satin and the two began fixing this in the mechanism in a manner reminiscent of a roll of paper in a nineteenth century printing machine. Then they ran the entire thing on its easy, noiseless bearings across the room to a remote corner where a twisted cable looped rather gracefully from the wall. They made some connection and the machine became energetic and swift.

"What is that doing?" asked Graham, pointing with the empty glass to the busy figures and trying to ignore the scrutiny of the newcomer. "Is that—some sort of force—laid on?"

"Yes" said the man with the flaxen beard.

"Who is *that*?" He indicated the archway behind him.

The man in purple stroked his little beard, hesitated, and answered in an undertone, "He is Howard, your chief guardian. You see Sire,—it's a little difficult to explain. The Council appoints a guardian and assistants. This hall has under certain restrictions been public. In order that people might satisfy themselves. We have barred the doorways for the first time. But I think—if you don't mind, I will leave him to explain."

"Odd!" said Graham. "Guardian? Council?" Then turning his back on the newcomer, he asked in an undertone, "Why is this man *glaring* at me? Is he a mesmerist?"

"Mesmerist! He is a capillotomist."

"Capillotomist!"

"Yes—one of the chief. His yearly fee is sixdoz lions." It sounded sheer nonsense. Graham snatched at the

last phrase with an unsteady mind. "Sixdoz lions?" he said.

"Didn't you have lions? I suppose not. You had the old pounds? They are our monetary units."

"But what was that you said—sixdoz?"

"Yes. Six dozen, Sir. Of course things, even these little things, have altered. You lived in the days of the decimal system, the Arab system—tens, and little hundreds and thousands. We have eleven numerals now. We have single figures for both ten and eleven, two figures for a dozen, and a dozen dozen makes a gross, a great hundred, you know, a dozen gross a dozand, and a dozand dozand a myriad. Very simple?"

"I suppose so," said Graham. "But about this cap—what was it?"

The man with the flaxen beard glanced over his shoulder.

"Here are your clothes!" he said. Graham turned round sharply and saw the tailor standing at his elbow smiling, and holding some palpably new garments over his arm. The crop-headed boy, by means of one finger, was impelling the complicated machine towards the lift by which he had arrived. Graham stared at the completed suit. "You don't mean to say—!"

"Just made," said the tailor. He dropped the garments at the feet of Graham, walked to the bed on which Graham had so recently been lying, flung out the translucent mattress, and turned up the looking-glass. As he did so a furious bell summoned the thickset man to the corner. The man with the flaxen beard rushed across to him and then hurried out by the archway.

The tailor was assisting Graham into a dark purple combination garment, stockings, vest, and pants in one, as the thickset man came back from the corner to meet the man with the flaxen beard returning from the balcony. They began speaking quickly in an undertone, their bearing had an unmistakable quality of anxiety. Over the purple under-garment came a complex but graceful garment of bluish white, and Graham was clothed in the fashion once more and saw himself, sallow-faced, unshaven and shaggy still, but at least naked no longer, and in some indefinable unprecedented way graceful.

"I must shave," he said regarding himself in the glass.

"In a moment," said Howard.

The persistent stare ceased. The young man closed his eyes, reopened them, and with a lean hand extended, advanced on Graham. Then he stopped, with his hand slowly gesticulating, and looked about him.

"A seat," said Howard impatiently and in a moment the flaxen-bearded man had a chair behind Graham. "Sit down, please," said Howard.

Graham hesitated, and in the other hand of the wild-eyed man he saw the glint of steel.

"Don't you understand, Sir?" cried the flaxen-bearded man with hurried politeness. "He is going to cut your hair."

"Oh!" cried Graham enlightened. "But you called him—"

"A capillotomist—precisely! He is one of the finest artists in the world."

Graham sat down abruptly. The flaxen-bearded man disappeared. The capillotomist came forward with graceful gestures, examined Graham's ears and surveyed him, felt the back of his head, and would have sat down again to regard him but for Howard's audible impatience. Forthwith with rapid movements and a succession of deftly handled implements he shaved Graham's chin, clipped his moustache, and cut and arranged his hair. All this he did without a word, with something of the rapt air of a poet inspired. And as soon as he had finished, Graham was handed a pair of shoes.

Suddenly a loud voice shouted—it seemed from a piece of machinery in the corner—"At once—at once. The people know all over the city. Work is being stopped.

Work is being stopped. Wait for nothing, but come."

This shout appeared to perturb Howard exceedingly. By his gestures it seemed to Graham that he hesitated between two directions. Abruptly he went towards the corner where the apparatus stood about the little crystal ball. As he did so the undertone of tumultuous shouting from the archway that had continued during all these occurrences rose to a mighty sound, roared as if it were sweeping past, and fell again as if receding swiftly. It drew Graham after it with an irresistible attraction. He glanced at the thickset man, and then obeyed his impulse. In two strides he was down the steps and in the passage, and in a score he was out upon the balcony upon which the three men had been standing.

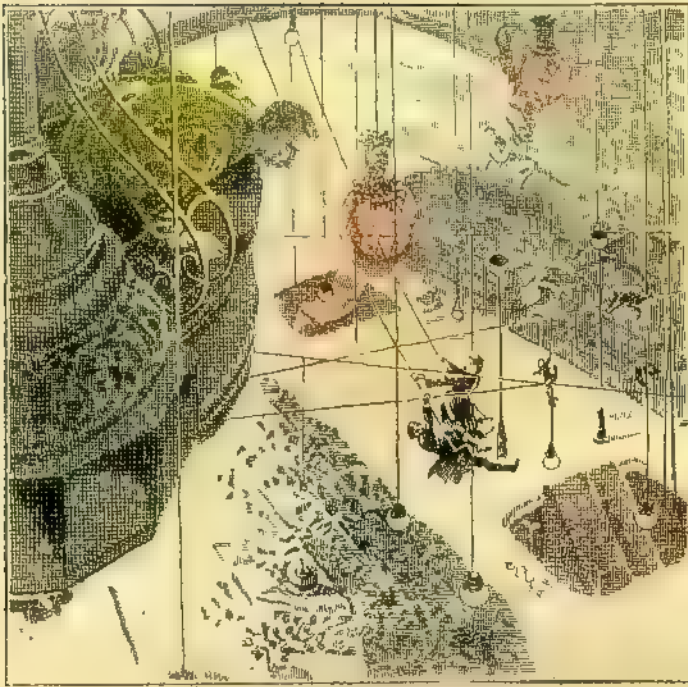
CHAPTER V

The Moving Ways

HE went to the railings of the balcony and stared upward. An exclamation of surprise at his appearance, and the movements of a number of people came from the spacious area below.

His first impression was of overwhelming architecture. The place into which he looked was an aisle of Titanic buildings, curving spaciously in either direction. Overhead mighty cantilevers sprang together across the huge width of the place, and a tracery of translucent material shut out the sky. Gigantic globes of cool white light shamed the pale sunbeams that filtered down through the girders and wires. Here and there a gossamer suspension bridge dotted with foot passengers flung across the chasm and the air was webbed with slender cables. A cliff of edifice hung above him, he perceived as he glanced upward, and the opposite facade was grey and dim and broken by great archings, circular perforations, balconies, buttresses, turret projections, myriads of vast windows, and an intricate scheme of architectural relief. Athwart these ran inscriptions horizontally and obliquely in an unfamiliar lettering. Here and there close to the roof cables of a peculiar stoutness were fastened, and dropped in a steep curve to circular openings on the opposite side of the space, and even as Graham noted these a remote and tiny figure of a man clad in pale blue arrested his attention. This little figure was far overhead across the space beside the higher fastening of one of these festoons, hanging forward from a little ledge of masonry and handling some well-nigh invisible strings dependent from the line. Then suddenly, with a swoop that sent Graham's heart into his mouth this man had rushed down the curve and vanished through a round opening on the hither side of the way. Graham had been looking up as he came out upon the balcony, and the things he saw above and opposed to him had at first seized his attention to the exclusion of anything else. Then suddenly he discovered the roadway! It was not a roadway at all, as Graham understood such things, for in the nineteenth century the only roads and streets were beaten tracks of motionless earth, jostling rivulets of vehicles between narrow footways. But this roadway was three hundred feet across, and it moved; it moved, all save the middle, the lowest part. For a moment, the motion dazzled his mind. Then he understood.

Under the balcony this extraordinary roadway ran swiftly to Graham's right, an endless flow rushing along as fast as a nineteenth century express train, an endless platform of narrow transverse overlapping slats with little interspaces that permitted it to follow the curvatures of the street. Upon it were seats, and here and there little kiosks, but they swept by too swiftly for him to see what might be therein. From this nearest and swiftest platform a series of others descended to the centre of the space. Each moved to the right, each perceptibly slower than the one above it, but the difference in pace was small enough to permit anyone to step



You must come away.

from any platform to the one adjacent, and so walk uninterrupted from the swiftest to the motionless middle way. Beyond this middle way was another series of endless platforms rushing with varying pace to Graham's left. And seated in crowds upon the two widest and swiftest platforms, or stepping from one to another down the steps, or swarming over the central space, was an innumerable and wonderfully diversified multitude of people.

"You must not stop here," shouted Howard suddenly at his side. "You must come away at once."

Graham made no answer. He heard without hearing. The platforms ran with a roar and the people were shouting. He perceived women and girls with flowing hair, beautifully robed, with bands crossing between the breasts. These first came out of the confusion. Then he perceived that the dominant note in that kaleidoscope of costume was the pale blue that the tailor's boy had worn. He became aware of cries of "The Sleeper. What has happened to the Sleeper?" and it seemed as though the rushing platforms before him were suddenly spattered with the pale buff of human faces, and then still more thickly. He saw pointing fingers. He perceived that the motionless central area of this huge arcade just opposite to the balcony was densely crowded with blue-clad people. Some sort of struggle had sprung into life. People seemed to be pushed up the running platforms on either side, and carried away against their will. They would spring off so soon as they were beyond the thick of the confusion, and run back towards the conflict.

"It is the Sleeper. Verily it is the Sleeper," shouted voices. "That is never the Sleeper," shouted others. More and more faces were turned to him. At the intervals along this central area Graham noted openings, pits, apparently the heads of staircases going down with people ascending out of them and descending into them. The struggle it seemed centered about the one of these nearest to him. People were running down the moving platforms to this, leaping dexterously from platform to platform. The clustering people on the higher platforms seemed to divide their interest between this point and the balcony. A number of sturdy little figures clad in a uniform of bright red, and working methodically together, were employed it seemed in preventing access to this descending staircase. About them a crowd was rapidly accumulating. Their brilliant color contrasted

vividly with the whitish-blue of their antagonists, for the struggle was indisputable.

He saw these things with Howard shouting in his ear and shaking his arm. And then suddenly Howard was gone and he stood alone.

He perceived that the cries of "The Sleeper!" grew in volume, and that the people on the nearer platform were standing up. The nearer, swifter platform he perceived was empty to the right of him, and far across the space the platform running in the opposite direction was coming crowded and passing away bare. With incredible swiftness a vast crowd had gathered in the central space before his eyes; a dense swaying mass of people, and the shouts grew from a fitful crying to a voluminous incessant clamor: "The Sleeper! The Sleeper!" and yells and cheers, a waving of garments and cries of "Stop the ways!" They were also crying another name strange to Graham. It sounded like "Ostrog." The slower platforms were soon thick with active people, running against the movement so as to keep themselves opposite to him.

"Stop the ways," they cried. Agile figures ran up swiftly from the centre to the swift road nearest to him, were borne rapidly past him, shouting strange, unintelligible things, and ran back obliquely to the central way. One thing he distinguished: "It is indeed the Sleeper. It is indeed the Sleeper," they testified.

For a space Graham stood without a movement. Then he became vividly aware that all this concerned him. He was pleased at his wonderful popularity, he bowed, and, seeking a gesture of longer range, waved his arm. He was astonished at the violence of uproar that this provoked. The tumult about the descending stairway rose to furious violence. He became aware of crowded balconies, of men sliding along ropes, of men in trapeze-like seats hurling athwart the space. He heard voices behind him, a number of people descending the steps through the archway; he suddenly perceived that his guardian Howard was back again and gripping his arm painfully, and shouting inaudibly in his ear.

He turned, and Howard's face was white. "Come back," he heard. "They will stop the ways. The whole city will be in confusion."

He perceived a number of men hurrying along the passage of blue pillars behind Howard, the red-haired man, the man with the flaxen beard, a tall man in vivid vermilion, a crowd of others in red carrying staves, and all these people had anxious eager faces.

"Get him away," cried Howard.

"But why?" said Graham. "I don't see—"

"You must come away!" said the man in red in a resolute voice. His face and eyes were resolute, too. Graham's glances went from face to face, and he was suddenly aware of that most disagreeable flavor in life, compulsion. Some one gripped his arm. . . . He was being dragged away. It seemed as though the tumult suddenly became two, as if half the shouts that had come in from this wonderful roadway had sprung into the passages of the great building behind him. Marvelling and confused, feeling an impotent desire to resist, Graham was half led, half thrust, along the passage of blue pillars, and suddenly he found himself alone with Howard in a lift and moving swiftly upward.

CHAPTER VI

The Hall of the Atlas

FROM the moment when the tailor had bowed his farewell to the moment when Graham found himself in the lift, was altogether barely five minutes. And as yet the haze of his vast interval of sleep hung about him, as yet the initial strangeness of his being alive at all in this remote age touched everything with wonder, with a sense of the irrational, with something of the quality of a

realistic dream. He was still detached, an astonished spectator, still but half involved in life. What he had seen, and especially the last crowded tumult, framed in the setting of the balcony, had a spectacular turn, like a thing witnessed from the box of a theatre. "I don't understand," he said. "What was the trouble? My mind is in a whirl. Why were they shouting? What is the danger?"

"We have our troubles," said Howard. His eyes avoided Graham's inquiry. "This is a time of unrest. And, in fact, your appearance, your waking just now, has a sort of connection—"

He spoke jerkily, like a man not quite sure of his breathing. He stopped abruptly.

"I don't understand," said Graham.

"It will be clearer later," said Howard.

He glanced uneasily upward, as though he found the progress of the lift slow.

"I shall understand better, no doubt, when I have seen my way about a little," said Graham puzzled. "It will be—it is bound to be perplexing. At present it is all so strange. Anything seems possible. Anything. In the details even. Your counting, I understand, is different."

The lift stopped, and they stepped out into a narrow but very long passage between high walls, along which ran an extraordinary number of tubes and big cables.

"What a huge place this is!" said Graham. "Is it all one building? What place is it?"

"This is one of the city ways for various public services. Light and so forth."

"Was it a social trouble—that—in the great roadway place? How are you governed? Have you still a police?"

"Several," said Howard.

"Several?"

"About fourteen."

"I don't understand."

"Very probably not. Our social order will probably seem very complex to you. To tell you the truth I don't understand it myself very clearly. Nobody does. You will perhaps—bye and bye. We have to go to the Council."

Graham's attention was divided between the urgent necessity of his inquiries and the people in the passages and halls they were traversing. For a moment his mind would be concentrated upon Howard and the halting answers he made, and then he would lose the thread in response to some vivid unexpected impression. Along the passages, in the halls, half the people seemed to be men in the red uniform. The pale blue canvas that had been so abundant in the aisle of moving ways did not appear. Invariably these men looked at him, and saluted him and Howard as they passed.

He had a clear vision of entering a long corridor, and there were a number of girls sitting on low seats and as though in a class. He saw no teacher, but only a novel apparatus from which he fancied a voice proceeded. The girls regarded him and his conductor, he thought, with curiosity and astonishment. But he was hurried on before he could form a clear idea of the gathering. He judged they knew Howard and not himself, and that they wondered who he was. This Howard, it seemed, was a person of importance. But then he was also merely Graham's Guardian. That was odd.

There came a passage in twilight, and into this passage a footway hung so that he could see the feet and ankles of people going to and fro thereon but no more of them. Then vague impressions of galleries and of casual astonished passers-by turning around to stare after the two of them with their red-clad guard.

The stimulus of the restoratives he had taken was only temporary. He was speedily fatigued by this excessive haste. He asked Howard to slacken his speed. Presently he was in a lift that had a window upon the

great street space, but this was glazed and did not open, and they were too high for him to see the moving platforms below. But he saw people going to and fro along cables and along strange, frail-looking bridges.

And thence they passed across the street and at a vast height above it. They crossed by means of a narrow bridge closed in with glass, so clear that it made him giddy even to remember it. The floor of it also was of glass. From his memory of the cliffs between New Quay and Boscastle, so remote in time, and so recent in his experience, it seemed to him that they must be near four hundred feet above the moving ways. He stopped, looked down between his legs upon the swarming blue and red multitudes, minute and fore-shortened, struggling and gesticulating still towards the little balcony far below, a little toy balcony, it seemed, where he had so recently been standing. A thin haze and the glare of the mighty globes of light obscured everything. A man seated in a little open-work cradle shot by from some point still higher than the little narrow bridge, rushing down a cable as swiftly almost as if he were falling. Graham stopped involuntarily to watch this strange passenger vanish in a great circular opening below, and then his eyes went back to the tumultuous struggle.

Along one of the swifter ways rushed a thick crowd of red spots. This broke up into individuals as it approached the balcony, and went pouring down the slower ways towards the dense struggling crowd on the central area. These men in red appeared to be armed with sticks or truncheons; they seemed to be striking and thrusting. A great shouting, cries of wrath, screaming, burst out and came up to Graham, faint and thin. "Go on," cried Howard, laying hands on him.

Another man rushed down a cable. Graham suddenly glanced up to see whence he came, and beheld through the glassy roof and the network of cables and girders, dim rhythmically passing forms like the vans of wind-mills, and between them glimpses of a remote and pallid sky. Then Howard had thrust him forward across the bridge, and he was in a little narrow passage decorated with geometrical patterns.

"I want to see more of that," cried Graham, resisting.

"No, no," cried Howard, still gripping his arm. "This way. You must go this way." And the men in red following them seemed ready to enforce his orders.

Some negroes in a curious wasp-like uniform of black and yellow appeared down the passage and one hastened to throw up a sliding shutter that had seemed a door to Graham, and led the way through it. Graham found himself in a gallery overhanging the end of a great chamber. The attendant in black and yellow crossed this, thrust up a second shutter and stood waiting.

THIS place had the appearance of an ante-room. He saw a number of people in the central space, and at the opposite end a large and imposing doorway at the top of a flight of steps, heavily curtained but giving a glimpse of some still larger hall beyond. He perceived white men in red and other negroes in black and yellow standing stiffly about those portals.

As they crossed the gallery he heard a whisper from below, "The Sleeper," and was aware of a turning of heads, a hum of observation. They entered another little passage in the wall of this ante-chamber, and then he found himself on an iron-railed gallery of metal that passed round the side of the great hall he had already seen through the curtains. He entered the place at the corner, so that he received the fullest impression of its huge proportions. The black in the wasp uniform stood aside like a well-trained servant, and closed the valve behind him.

Compared with any of the places Graham had seen thus far, this second hall appeared to be decorated with extreme richness. On a pedestal at the remoter end, and

more brilliantly lit than any other object, was a gigantic white figure of Atlas, strong and strenuous, the globe upon his bowed shoulders. It was the first thing to strike his attention, it was so vast, so patiently and painfully real, so white and simple. Save for this figure and for a dais in the centre, the wide floor of the place was a shining vacancy. The dais was remote in the greatness of the area; it would have looked a mere slab of metal had it not been for the group of seven men who stood about a table on it, and gave an inkling of its proportions. They were all dressed in white robes, they seemed to have arisen that moment from their seats, and they were regarding Graham steadfastly. At the end of the table he perceived the glitter of some mechanical appliances.

Howard led him along the end gallery until they were opposite this mighty laboring figure. Then he stopped. The two men in red who had followed them into the gallery came and stood on either hand of Graham.

"You must remain here," murmured Howard, "for a few moments," and, without waiting for a reply, hurried away along the gallery.

"But, *why*—?" began Graham.

He moved as if to follow Howard, and found his path obstructed by one of the men in red. "You have to wait here, Sire," said the man in red.

"*Why*?"

"Orders, Sire."

"Whose orders?"

"Our orders, Sire."

Graham looked his exasperation.

"What place is this?" he said presently. "Who are those men?"

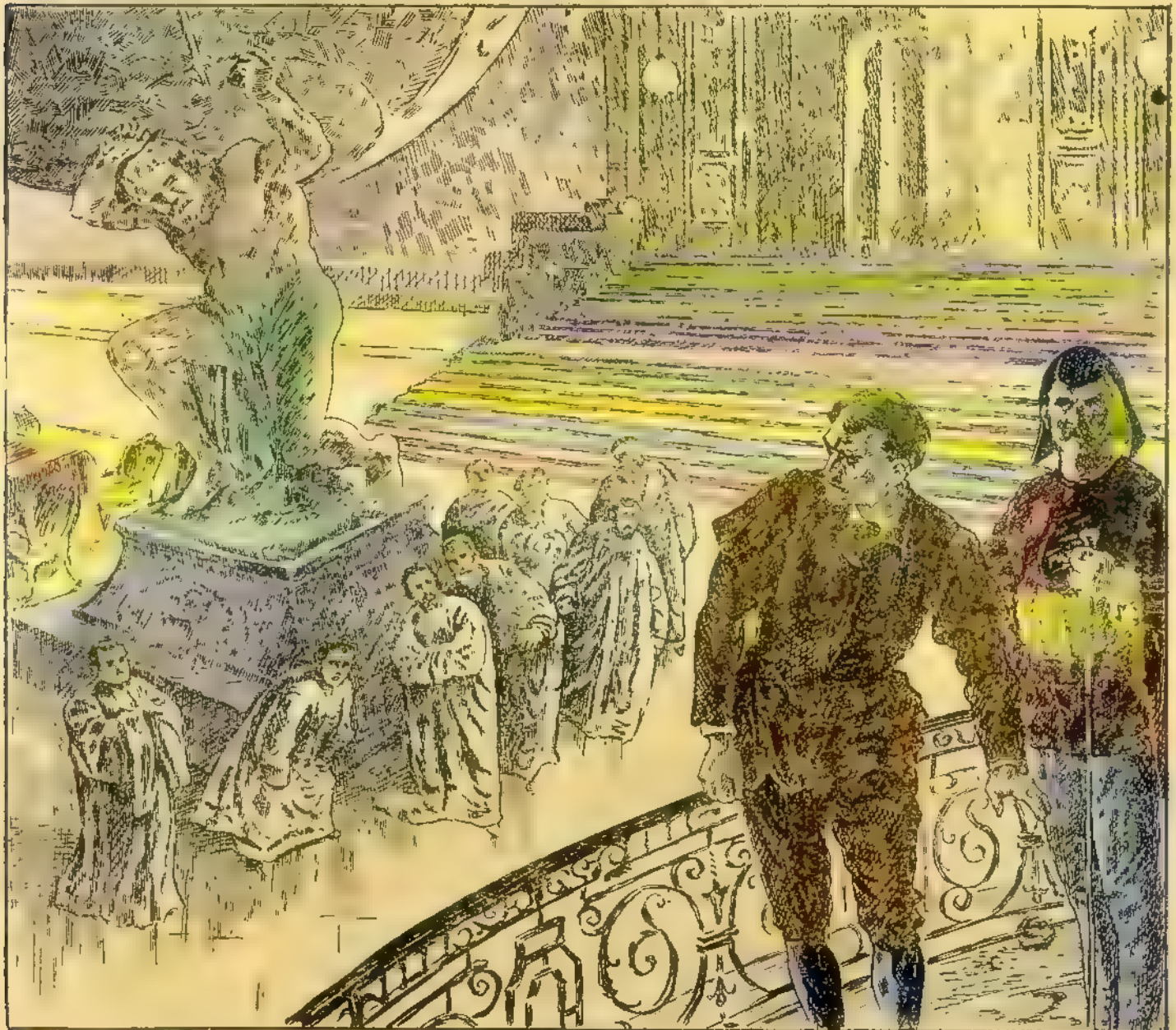
"They are the lords of the Council, Sire."

"What Council?"

"The Council."

"Oh!" said Graham, and after an equally ineffectual attempt at the other man, went to the railing and stared at the distant men in white, who stood watching him and whispering together.

The Council? He perceived there were now eight, though how the newcomer had arrived he had not observed. They made no gestures of greeting; they stood regarding him as in the nineteenth century a group of men might have stood in the street regarding a distant balloon that had suddenly floated into view. What council could it be that gathered there, that little body of men beneath the significant white Atlas, secluded from every eavesdropper in this impressive spaciousness? And why should he be brought to them, and be looked at strangely and spoken of inaudibly? Howard appeared beneath,



Graham saw the white robed council still standing in a close group.

walking quickly across the polished floor towards them. As he drew near he bowed and performed certain peculiar movements, apparently of a ceremonious nature. Then he ascended the steps of the dais, and stood by the apparatus at the end of the table.

Graham watched that visible inaudible conversation. Occasionally, one of the white-robed men would glance towards him. He strained his ears in vain. The gesticulation of two of the speakers became animated. He glanced from them to the passive faces of his attendants. . . . When he looked again Howard was extending his hands and moving his head like a man who protests. He was interrupted, it seemed, by one of the white-robed men rapping the table.

The conversation lasted an interminable time to Graham's sense. His eyes rose to the still giant at whose feet the Council sat. Thence they wandered at last to the walls of the hall. It was decorated in long painted panels of a quasi-Japanese type many of them very beautiful. These panels were grouped in a great and elaborate framing of dark metal, which passed into the metallic caryatidae of the galleries, and the great structural lines of the interior. The facile grace of these panels enhanced the mighty white effort that labored in the centre of the scheme. Graham's eyes came back to the Council, and Howard was descending the steps. As he drew nearer, his features could be distinguished, and Graham saw that he was flushed and blowing out his cheeks. His countenance was still disturbed when presently he reappeared along the gallery.

"This way," he said concisely, and they went on in silence to a little door that opened at their approach. The two men in red stopped on either side of this door. Howard and Graham passed in, and Graham, glancing back, saw the white-robed Council still standing in a close group and looking at him. Then the door closed behind him with a heavy thud, and for the first time since his awakening he was in silence. The floor, even, was noiseless to his feet.

Howard opened another door, and they were in the first of two contiguous chambers furnished in white and green. "What Council was that?" began Graham. "What were they discussing? What have they to do with me?" Howard closed the door carefully, heaved a huge sigh, and said something in an undertone. He walked slantingways across the room and turned, blowing out his cheeks again. "Ugh!" he grunted, a man relieved.

Graham stood regarding him.

"You must understand," began Howard abruptly, avoiding Graham's eyes, "that our social order is very complex. A half explanation, a bare unqualified statement would give you false impressions. As a matter of fact—it is a case of compound interest partly—your small fortune, and the fortune of your cousin Warming which was left to you—and certain other beginnings—have become very considerable. And in other ways that will be hard for you to understand, you have become a person of significance—of very considerable significance—in involved in the world's affairs."

He stopped.

"Yes?" said Graham.

"We have grave social troubles."

"Yes?"

"Things have come to such a pass that, in fact, it is advisable to seclude you here."

"Keep me prisoner!" exclaimed Graham.

"Well—to ask you to keep in seclusion."

Graham turned on him. "This is strange!" he said.

"No harm will be done you."

"No harm!"

"But you must be kept here—"

"While I learn my position, I presume."

"Precisely."

"Very well then. Begin. Why harm?"

"Not now."

"Why not?"

"It is too long a story, Sire."

"All the more reason I should begin at once. You say I am a person of importance. What was that shouting I heard? Why is a great multitude shouting and excited because my trance is over, and who are the men in white in that huge council chamber?"

"All in good time, Sire," said Howard. "But not crudely, not crudely. This is one of those flimsy times when no man has a settled mind. Your awakening. No one expected your awakening. The Council is consulting."

"What council?"

"The Council you saw."

Graham made a petulant movement. "This is not right," he said. "I should be told what is happening."

"You must wait. Really you must wait."

Graham sat down abruptly. "I suppose since I have waited so long to resume life" he said, "that I must wait a little longer."

"That is better," said Howard. "Yes, that is much better. And I must leave you alone. For a space. While I attend the discussion in the Council. . . . I am sorry."

He went towards the noiseless door, hesitated and vanished.

Graham walked to the door, tried it, found it securely fastened in some way he never came to understand, turned about, paced the room restlessly, made the circuit of the room, and sat down. He remained sitting for some time with folded arms and knitted brow, biting his finger nails and trying to piece together the kaleidoscopic impressions of this first hour of awakened life; the vast mechanical spaces, the endless series of chambers and passages, the great struggle that roared and splashed through these strange ways, the little group of remote unsympathetic men beneath the colossal Atlas, Howard's mysterious behavior. There was an inkling of some vast inheritance already in his mind—a vast inheritance perhaps misapplied—of some unprecedented importance and opportunity. What had he to do? And this room's secluded silence was eloquent of imprisonment!

It came into Graham's mind with irresistible conviction that this series of magnificent impressions was a dream. He tried to shut his eyes and succeeded, but that time-honored device led to no awakening.

Presently he began to touch and examine all the unfamiliar appointments of the two small rooms in which he found himself.

In a long oval panel of mirror he saw himself and stopped astonished. He was clad in a graceful costume of purple and bluish white, with a little greyshot beard trimmed to a point, and his hair, its blackness streaked now with bands of grey, arranged over his forehead in an unfamiliar but graceful manner. He seemed a man of five-and-forty perhaps. For a moment he did not perceive this was himself.

A flash of laughter came with the recognition. "To call on old Warming like this!" he exclaimed, "and make him take me out to lunch!"

Then he thought of meeting first one and then another of the few familiar acquaintances of his early manhood, and in the midst of his amusement realized that every soul with whom he might jest had died many score of years ago. The thought smote him abruptly and keenly; he stopped short, the expression of his face changed to a white consternation.

The tumultuous memory of the moving platforms and the huge facade of that wonderful street reasserted itself. The shouting multitudes came back clear and vivid, and those remote, inaudible, unfriendly councillors in white. He felt himself a little figure, very small and ineffectual,

pitifully conspicuous. And all about him, the world was —strange."

CHAPTER VII

In the Silent Rooms

PRESENTLY Graham resumed his examination of his apartments. Curiosity kept him moving in spite of his fatigue. The inner room, he perceived, was high, and its ceiling dome shaped, with an oblong aperture in the centre, opening into a funnel in which a wheel of broad vans seemed to be rotating, apparently driving the air up the shaft. The faint humming note of its easy motion was the only clear sound in that quiet place. As these vans sprang up one after the other Graham could get transient glimpses of the sky. He was surprised to see a star.

This drew his attention to the fact that the bright lighting of these rooms was due to a multitude of very faint glow lamps set about the cornices. There were no windows. And he began to recall that along all the vast chambers and passages he had traversed with Howard he had observed no windows at all. Had there been windows? There were windows on the street indeed, but were they for light? Or was the whole city lit day and night for evermore, so that there was no night there?

And another thing dawned upon him. There was no fireplace in either room. Was the season summer, and were these merely summer apartments, or was the whole city uniformly heated or cooled? He became interested in these questions, began examining the smooth texture of the walls, the simply constructed bed, the ingenious arrangements by which the labor of bedroom service was practically abolished. And over everything was a curious absence of deliberate ornament, a bare grace of form and color, that he found very pleasing to the eye. There were several very comfortable chairs, a light table on silent runners carrying several bottles of fluids and glasses, and two plates bearing a clear substance like jelly. Then he noticed there were no books, no newspapers, no writing materials. "The world has changed indeed," he said.

He observed one entire side of the outer room was set with rows of peculiar double cylinders inscribed with green lettering on white that harmonized with the decorative scheme of the room, and in the centre of this side projected a little apparatus about a yard square and having a white smooth face to the room. A chair faced this. He had a transitory idea that these cylinders might be books, or a modern substitute for books, but at first it did not seem so.

The lettering on the cylinders puzzled him. At first sight it seemed like Russian. Then he noticed a suggestion of mutilated English about certain of the words.

"*Ōi Man huwdbi Kin,*"

forced itself on him as "The Man who would be King." "Phonetic spelling," he said. He remembered reading a story with that title, then he recalled the story vividly, one of the best stories in the world. But this thing before him was not a book as he understood it. He puzzled out the titles of two adjacent cylinders. "The Heart of Darkness," he had never heard of before nor "The Madonna of the Future"—no doubt if they were indeed stories, they were by post Victorian authors.

He puzzled over this peculiar cylinder for some time and replaced it. Then he turned to the square apparatus and examined that. He opened a sort of lid and found one of the double cylinders within and on the upper edge a little stud like the stud of an electric bell. He pressed this and a rapid clicking began and ceased. He became aware of voices and music, and noticed a play of color on the smooth front face. He suddenly

realized what this might be, and stepped back to regard it.

On the flat surface was now a little picture, very vividly colored, and in this picture were figures that moved. Not only did they move, but they were conversing in clear small voices. It was exactly like reality viewed through an inverted opera glass and heard through a long tube. His interest was seized at once by the situation, which presented a man pacing up and down and vociferating angry things to a pretty but petulant woman. Both were in the picturesque costume that seemed so strange to Graham. "I have worked," said the man, "but what have you been doing?"

"Ah!" said Graham. He forgot everything else, and sat down in the chair. Within five minutes he heard himself named, heard "when the Sleeper wakes," used jestingly as a proverb for remote postponement, and passed himself by, a thing remote and incredible. But in a little while he knew those two people like intimate friends.

At last the miniature drama came to an end, and the square face of the apparatus was blank again.

It was a strange world into which he had been permitted to see, unscrupulous, pleasure seeking, energetic, subtle, a world too of dire economic struggle; there were allusions he did not understand, incidents that conveyed strange suggestions of altered moral ideals, flashes of dubious enlightenment. The blue canvas that bulked so largely in his first impression of the city ways appeared again and again as the costume of the common people. He had no doubt the story was contemporary, and its intense realism was undeniable. And the end had been a tragedy that oppressed him. He sat staring at the blankness.

He started and rubbed his eyes. He had been so absorbed in the latter-day substitute for a novel, that he awoke to the little green and white room with more than a touch of the surprise of his first awakening.

He stood up, and abruptly he was back in his own wonderland. The clearness of the kinetoscope drama passed, and the struggle in the vast place of streets, the ambiguous Council, the swift phases of his waking hour, came back. These people had spoken of the Council with suggestions of a vague universality of power. And they had spoken of the Sleeper; it had not really struck him vividly at the time that he was the Sleeper. He had to recall precisely what they had said. . . .

He walked into the bedroom and peered up through the quick intervals of the revolving fan. As the fan swept round, a dim turmoil like the noise of machinery came in rhythmic eddies. All else was silence. Though the perpetual day still irradiated his apartments, he perceived the little intermittent strip of sky was now deep blue—black almost, with a dust of little stars. . . .

He resumed his examination of the rooms. He could find no way of opening the padded door, no bell nor other means of calling for attendance. His feeling of wonder was in abeyance; but he was curious, anxious for information. He wanted to know exactly how he stood to these new things. He tried to compose himself to wait until someone came to him. Presently he became restless and eager for information, for distraction, for fresh sensations.

HE went back to the apparatus in the other room, and had soon puzzled out the method of replacing the cylinders by others. As he did so, it came into his mind that it must be these little appliances had fixed the language so that it was still clear and understandable after two hundred years. The haphazard cylinders he substituted displayed a musical fantasia. At first it was beautiful and then it was sensuous. He presently recognized what appeared to him to be an altered version of the story of Tannhauser. The music was unfamiliar. But the rendering was realistic, and

with a contemporary unfamiliarity. Tannhauser did not go to a Venusberg, but to a Pleasure City. What was a Pleasure City? A dream, surely, the fancy of a fantastic, voluptuous writer.

He became interested, curious. The story developed with a flavor of strangely twisted sentimentality. Suddenly he did not like it. He liked it less as it proceeded.

He had a revulsion of feeling. These were no pictures, no idealisations, but photographed realities. He wanted no more of the twenty-second century Venusberg. He forgot the part played by the model in nineteenth century art, and gave way to an archaic indignation. He rose, angry and half ashamed at himself for witnessing this thing even in solitude. He pulled forward the apparatus, and with some violence sought for a means of stopping its action. Something snapped. A violet spark stung and convulsed his arm and the thing was still. When he attempted next day to replace these Tannhauser cylinders by another pair, he found the apparatus broken.

He struck out a path oblique to the room and paced to and fro, struggling with intolerable vast impressions. The things he had derived from the cylinders and the things he had seen, conflicted, confused him. It seemed to him the most amazing thing of all that in his thirty years of life he had never tried to shape a picture of these coming times. "We were making the future," he said, "and hardly any of us troubled to think what future we were making. And here it is!"

"What have they got to, what has been done? How do I come into the midst of it all?" The vastness of street and house he was prepared for, the multitudes of people. But conflicts in the city ways! And the systematized sensuality of a class of rich men!

He thought of Bellamy, the hero of whose Socialistic Utopia had so oddly anticipated this actual experience. But here was no Utopia, no Socialistic state. He had already seen enough to realize that the ancient antithesis of luxury, waste and sensuality on the one hand and abject poverty on the other, still prevailed. He knew enough of the essential factors of life to understand that correlation. And not only were the buildings of the city gigantic and the crowds in the street gigantic, but the voices he had heard in the ways, the uneasiness of Howard, the very atmosphere spoke of gigantic discontent. What country was he in? Still England it seemed, and yet strangely "un-English." His mind glanced at the rest of the world, and saw only an enigmatical veil.

He prowled about his apartment, examining everything as a caged animal might do. He felt very tired, felt that feverish exhaustion that does not admit of rest. He listened for long spaces under the ventilator to catch some distant echo of the tumults he felt must be proceeding in the city.

He began to talk to himself. "Two hundred and three years!" he said to himself over and over again, laughing stupidly. "Then I am two hundred and thirty-three years old! The oldest inhabitant. Surely they haven't reversed the tendency of our time and gone back to the rule of the oldest. My claims are indisputable. Mumble, mumble. I remember the Bulgarian atrocities as though it was yesterday. 'Tis a great age! Ha ha!" He was surprised at first to hear himself laughing, and then laughed again deliberately and louder. Then he realized that he was behaving foolishly. "Steady," he said. "Steady!"

His pacing became more regular. "This new world," he said. "I don't understand it. *Why?* . . . But it is all *why!*"

"I suppose they can fly and do all sorts of things. Let me try and remember just how it began."

He was surprised at first to find how vague the mem-

ories of his first thirty years had become. He remembered fragments, for the most part trivial moments, things of no great importance that he had observed. His boyhood seemed the most accessible at first; he recalled school books and certain lessons in mensuration. Then he revived the more salient features of his life, memories of the wife long since dead, her magic influence now gone beyond corruption, of his rivals and friends and betrayers, of the swift decision of this issue and that, and then of his last years of misery, of fluctuating resolves, and at last of his strenuous studies. In a little while he perceived he had it all again; dim perhaps, like metal long laid aside, but in no way defective or injured, capable of re-polishing. And the hue of it was a deepening misery. Was it worth re-polishing? By a miracle he had been lifted out of a life that had become intolerable. . . .

He reverted to his present condition. He wrestled with the facts in vain. It became an inextricable tangle. He saw the sky through the ventilator pink with dawn. An old persuasion came out of the dark recesses of his memory. "I must sleep," he said. It appeared as a delightful relief from this mental distress and from the growing pain and heaviness of his limbs. He went to the strange little bed, lay down and was presently asleep. . . .

He was destined to become very familiar indeed with these apartments before he left them, for he remained imprisoned for three days. During that time no one, except Howard, entered his prison. The marvel of his fate mingled with and in some way minimized the marvel of his survival. He had awakened to mankind it seemed only to be snatched away into this unaccountable solitude. Howard came regularly with subtly sustaining and nutritive fluids, and light and pleasant foods, quite strange to Graham. He always closed the door carefully as he entered. On matters of detail he was increasingly obliging, but the bearing of Graham on the great issues that were evidently being contested so closely beyond the sound-proof walls that enclosed him, he would not elucidate. He evaded, as politely as possible, every question on the position of affairs in the outer world.

AND in those three days Graham's incessant thoughts went far and wide. All that he had seen, all this elaborate contrivance to prevent him seeing, worked together in his mind. Almost every possible interpretation of his position he debated—even as it chanced, the right interpretation. Things that presently happened to him, came to him at last credible, by virtue of this seclusion. When at length the moment of his release arrived, it found him prepared. . . .

Howard's bearing went far to deepen Graham's impression of his own strange importance; the door between its opening and closing seemed to admit with him a breath of momentous happening. His inquiries became more definite and searching. Howard retreated through protests and difficulties. The awakening was unforeseen, he repeated; it happened to have fallen in with the trend of a social convulsion. "To explain it I must tell you the history of a gross and a half of years," protested Howard.

"The thing is this," said Graham. "You are afraid of something I shall do. In some way I am arbitrator—I might be arbitrator."

"It is not that. But you have—I may tell you this much—the automatic increase of your property puts great possibilities of interference in your hands. And in certain other ways you have influence, with your eighteenth century notions."

"Nineteenth century," corrected Graham.

"With your old world notions, anyhow, ignorant as you are of every feature of our State."

"Am I a fool?"

"Certainly not."

"Do I seem to be the sort of man who would act rashly?"

"You were never expected to act at all. No one counted on your awakening. No one dreamt you would ever awake. The Council had surrounded you with antiseptic conditions. As a matter of fact, we thought that you were dead—a mere arrest of decay. And—but it is too complex. We dare not suddenly—while you are still half awake."

"It won't do," said Graham. "Suppose it is as you say—why am I not being crammed night and day with facts and warnings and all the wisdom of the time to fit me for my responsibilities? Am I any wiser now than two days ago, if it is two days, when I awoke?"

Howard pulled his lip.

"I am beginning to feel—every hour I feel more clearly—a sense of complex concealment of which you are the salient point. Is this Council, or committee, or whatever they are, cooking the accounts of my estate? Is that it?"

"That note of suspicion—" said Howard.

"Ugh!" said Graham. "Now, mark my words, it will be ill for those who have put me here. It will be ill. I am alive. Make no doubt of it, I am alive. Every day my pulse is stronger and my mind clearer and more vigorous. No more quiescence. I am a man come back to life. And I want to *live*—"

"Live!"

Howard's face lit with an idea. He came towards Graham and spoke in an easy confidential tone.

"The Council secludes you here for your good. You are restless. Naturally—an energetic man! You find it dull here. But we are anxious that everything you may desire—every desire—every sort of desire . . . There may be something. Is there any sort of company?"

He paused meaningly.

"Yes," said Graham thoughtfully. "There is."

"Ah! Now! We have treated you neglectfully."

"The crowds in yonder streets of yours."

"That," said Howard, "I am afraid—. But—"

Graham began pacing the room. Howard stood near the door watching him. The implication of Howard's suggestion was only half evident to Graham. Company? Suppose he were to accept the proposal, demand some sort of company? Would there be any possibilities of gathering from the conversation of this additional person some vague inkling of the struggle that had broken out so vividly at his waking moment? He meditated again, and the suggestion took color. He turned on Howard abruptly.

"What do you mean by company?"

Howard raised his eyes and shrugged his shoulders. "Human beings," he said, with a curious smile on his heavy face.

"Our social ideas," he said, "have a certain increased liberality, perhaps, in comparison with your times. If a man wishes to relieve such a tedium as this—by feminine society, for instance. We think it no scandal. We have cleared our minds of formulæ. There is in our city a class, a necessary class, no longer despised—discreet—"

Graham stopped dead.

"It would pass the time," said Howard. "It is a thing I should perhaps have thought of before, but, as a matter of fact, so much is happening—"

He indicated the exterior world.

Graham hesitated. For a moment the figure of a possible woman that his imagination suddenly created

dominated his mind with an intense attraction. Then he flashed into anger.

"No!" he shouted.

He began striding rapidly up and down the room. "Everything you say, everything you do, convinces me—of some great issue in which I am concerned. I do not want to pass the time, as you call it. Yes, I know. Desire and indulgence are life in a sense—and Death! Extinction! In my life before I slept I had worked out that pitiful question. I will not begin again. There is a city, a multitude—. And meanwhile I am here like a rabbit in a bag."

His rage surged high. He choked for a moment and began to wave his clenched fists. He gave way to an anger fit, he swore archaic curses. His gestures had the quality of physical threats.

"I do not know who your party may be. I am in the dark, and you keep me in the dark. But I know this, that I am secluded here for no good purpose. For no good purpose. I warn you, I warn you of the consequences. Once I come at my power—"

He realized that to threaten thus might be a danger to himself. He stopped. Howard stood regarding him with a curious expression.

"I take it this is a message to the Council," said Howard.

Graham had a momentary impulse to leap upon the man, fell or stun him. It must have shown upon his face; at any rate Howard's movement was quick. In a second the noiseless door had closed again, and the man from the nineteenth century was alone.

For a moment he stood rigid, with clenched hands half raised. Then he flung them down. "What a fool I have been!" he said, and gave way to his anger again, stamping about the room and shouting curses. . . . For a long time he kept himself in a sort of frenzy, raging at his position, at his own folly, at the knaves who had imprisoned him. He did this because he did not want to look calmly at his position. He clung to his anger—because he was afraid of Fear.

Presently he found himself reasoning with himself. This imprisonment was unaccountable, but no doubt the legal forms—new legal forms—of the time permitted it. It must, of course, be legal. These people were two hundred years further on in the march of civilization than the Victorian generation. It was not likely they would be less—humane. Yet they had cleared their minds of formulæ! Was humanity a formula as well as chastity?

His imagination set to work to suggest things that might be done to him. The attempts of his reason to dispose of these suggestions, though for the most part logically valid, were quite unavailing. "Why should anything be done to me?"

"If the worst comes to the worst," he found himself saying at last, "I can give up what they want. But what do they want? And why don't they ask me for it instead of cooping me up?"

He returned to his former preoccupation with the Council's possible intentions. He began to reconsider the details of Howard's behavior, sinister glances, inexplicable hesitations. Then, for a time, his mind circled about the idea of escaping from these rooms; but whither could he escape into this vast, crowded world? He would be worse off than a Saxon yeoman suddenly dropped into nineteenth century London. And besides, how could anyone escape from these rooms?

"How can it benefit anyone if harm should happen to me?"

He thought of the tumult, the great social trouble of which he was so unaccountably the axis. A text, irrelevant enough and yet curiously insistent, came float-

ing up out of the darkness of his memory. This also a Council had said:

"It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people."

CHAPTER VIII

The Roof Spaces

AS the fans in the circular aperture of the inner room rotated and permitted glimpses of the night, dim sounds drifted in thereby. And Graham, standing underneath, wrestling darkly with the unknown powers that imprisoned him, and which he had now deliberately challenged, was startled by the sound of a voice.

He peered up and saw in the intervals of the rotation, dark and dim, the face and shoulders of a man regarding him. Then a dark hand was extended, the swift van struck it, swung round and beat on with a little brownish patch on the edge of its thin blade, and something began to fall therefrom upon the floor, dripping silently.

Graham looked down, and there were spots of blood at his feet. He looked up again in a strange excitement. The figure had gone.

He remained motionless—his every sense intent upon the flickering patch of darkness, for outside it was high night. He became aware of some faint, remote, dark specks floating lightly through the outer air. They came down towards him, fitfully, eddyingly, and passed aside out of the uprush from the fan. A gleam of light flickered, the specks flashed white, and then the darkness came again. Warmed and lit as he was, he perceived that it was snowing within a few feet of him.

Graham walked across the room and came back to the ventilator again. He saw the head of a man pass near. There was a sound of whispering. Then a smart blow on some metallic substance, effort, voices, and the vans stopped. A gust of snowflakes whirled into the room, and vanished before they touched the floor. "Don't be afraid," said a voice.

Graham stood under the van. "Who are you?" he whispered.

For a moment there was nothing but a swaying of the fan, and then the head of a man was thrust cautiously into the opening. His face appeared nearly inverted to Graham; his dark hair was wet with dissolving flakes of snow upon it. His arm went up into the darkness holding something unseen. He had a youthful face and bright eyes, and the veins of his forehead were swollen. He seemed to be exerting himself to maintain his position.

For several seconds neither he nor Graham spoke.

"You were the Sleeper?" said the stranger at last.

"Yes," said Graham. "What do you want with me?"

"I come from Ostrog, Sire."

"Ostrog?"

The man in the ventilator twisted his head round so that his profile was towards Graham. He appeared to be listening. Suddenly there was a hasty exclamation, and the intruder sprang back just in time to escape the sweep of the released fan. And when Graham peered up there was nothing visible but the slowly falling snow.

It was perhaps a quarter of an hour before anything returned to the ventilator. But at last came the same metallic interference again; the fans stopped and the face reappeared. Graham had remained all this time in the same place, alert and tremulously excited.

"Who are you? What do you want?" he said.

"We want to speak to you, Sire," said the intruder. "We want—I can't hold the thing. We have been trying to find a way to you—these three days."

"Is it rescue?" whispered Graham. "Escape?"

"Yes, Sire. If you will."

"You are my party—the party of the Sleeper?"

"Yes, Sire."

"What am I to do?" said Graham.

There was a struggle. The stranger's arm appeared, and his hand was bleeding. His knees came into view over the edge of the funnel. "Stand away from me," he said, and he dropped rather heavily on his hands and one shoulder at Graham's feet. The released ventilator whirled noisily. The stranger rolled over, sprang up nimbly and stood panting, hand to a bruised shoulder, and with his bright eyes on Graham.

"You are indeed the Sleeper," he said. "I saw you asleep. When it was the law that anyone might see you."

"I am the man who was in the trance," said Graham. "They have imprisoned me here. I have been here since I awoke—at least three days."

The intruder seemed about to speak, heard something, glanced swiftly at the door, and suddenly left Graham and ran towards it, shouting quick incoherent words. A bright wedge of steel flashed in his hand, and he began tap, tap, a quick succession of blows upon the hinges. "Mind!" cried a voice. "Oh!" The voice came from above.

Graham glanced up, saw the soles of two feet, ducked, was struck on the shoulder by one of them, and a heavy weight bore him to the earth. He fell on his knees and forward, and the weight went over his head. He knelt up and saw a second man from above seated before him.

"I did not see you, Sire," panted the man. He rose and assisted Graham to arise. "Are you hurt, Sire?" he panted. A succession of heavy blows on the ventilator began, something fell close to Graham's face, and a shivering edge of white metal danced, fell over, and lay flat upon the floor.

"What is this?" cried Graham, confused and looking at the ventilator. "Who are you? What are you going to do? Remember, I understand nothing."

"Stand back," said the stranger, and drew him from under the ventilator as another fragment of metal fell heavily.

"We want you to come, Sire," panted the newcomer, and Graham glancing at his face again, saw a new cut had changed from white to red on his forehead, and a couple of little trickles of blood started therefrom. "Your people call for you."

"Come where? My people?"

"To the hall about the markets. Your life is in danger here. We have spies. We learned but just in time. The Council has decided—this very day—either to drug or kill you. And everything is ready. The people are drilled, the wind-vane police, the engineers, and half the way-gearers are with us. We have the halls crowded—shouting. The whole city shouts against the Council. We have arms." He wiped the blood with his hand. "Your life here is not worth—"

"But why arms?"

"The people have risen to protect you, Sire. What?"

He turned quickly as the man who had first come down made a hissing with his teeth. Graham saw the latter start back, gesticulate to them to conceal themselves, and move as if to hide behind the opening door.

As he did so Howard appeared, a little tray in one hand and his heavy face downcast. He started, looked up, the door slammed behind him, the tray tilted sideways, and the steel wedge struck him behind the ear. He went down like a felled tree, and lay as he fell athwart the floor of the outer room. The man who had struck him bent hastily, studied his face for a moment, rose, and returned to his work at the door.

"Your poison!" said a voice in Graham's ear.

THEN abruptly they were in darkness. The innumerable cornice lights had been extinguished. Graham saw the aperture of the ventilator with ghostly snow whirling above it and dark figures moving hastily. Three knelt on the van. Some dim thing—a ladder—was being lowered through the opening, and a hand appeared holding a fitful yellow light.

He had a moment of hesitation. But the manner of these men, their swift alacrity, their words, marched so completely with his own fears of the Council, with his idea and hope of a rescue, that it lasted not a moment. And his people awaited him!

"I do not understand," he said, "I trust. Tell me what to do."

The man with the cut brow gripped Graham's arm. "Clamber up the ladder," he whispered. "Quick. They will have heard—"

Graham felt for the ladder with extended hands, put his foot on the lower rung, and, turning his head, saw over the shoulder of the nearest man, in the yellow flicker of the light, the first-comer astride over Howard and still working at the door. Graham turned to the ladder again, and was thrust by his conductor and helped up by those above, and then he was standing on something hard and cold and slippery outside the ventilating funnel.

He shivered. He was aware of a great difference in the temperature. Half a dozen men stood about him, and light flakes of snow touched hands and face and melted. For a moment it was dark, then for a flash a ghastly violet white, and then everything was dark again.

He saw he had come out upon the roof of the vast city structure which had replaced the miscellaneous houses, streets and open spaces of Victorian London. The place upon which he stood was level, with huge serpentine cables lying athwart it in every direction. The circular wheels of a number of windmills loomed indistinct and gigantic through the darkness and snowfall, and roared with a varying loudness as the fitful wind rose and fell. Some way off an intermittent white light smote up from below, touched the snow eddies with a transient glitter, and made an evanescent spectre in the night; and here and there, low down, some vaguely outlined wind-driven mechanism flickered with livid sparks.

All this he appreciated in a fragmentary manner as his rescuers stood about him. Someone threw a thick, soft cloak of fur-like texture about him, and fastened it by buckled straps at waist and shoulders. Things were said briefly, decisively. Someone thrust him forward.

Before his mind was yet clear a dark shape gripped his arm. "This way," said this shape, urging him along, and pointed Graham across the flat roof in the direction of a dim semicircular haze of light. Graham obeyed.

"Mind!" said a voice, as Graham stumbled against a cable. "Between them and not across them," said the voice. And, "We must hurry."

"Where are the people?" said Graham. "The people you said awaited me?"

The stranger did not answer. He left Graham's arm as the path grew narrower, and led the way with rapid strides. Graham followed blindly. In a minute he found himself running. "Are the others coming?" he panted, but received no reply. His companion glanced back and ran on. They came to a sort of pathway of open metal-work, transverse to the direction they had come, and they turned aside to follow this. Graham looked back, but the snowstorm had hidden the others.

"Come on!" said his guide. Running now, they drew near a little windmill spinning high in the air. "Stoop,"

said Graham's guide, and they avoided an endless band running roaring up to the shaft of the vane. "This way!" and they were ankle deep in a gutter full of drifted, thawing snow, between two low walls of metal that presently rose waist high. "I will go first," said the guide. Graham drew his cloak about him and followed. Then suddenly came a narrow abyss across which the gutter leapt to the snowy darkness of the further side. Graham peeped over the side once and the gulf was black. For a moment he regretted his flight. He dared not look again, and his brain spun as he waded through the half liquid snow.

Then out of the gutter they clambered and hurried across a wide, flat space damp with thawing snow, and for half its extent dimly translucent to lights that went to and fro underneath. He hesitated at this unstable looking substance, but his guide ran on unheeding, and so they came to and clambered up slippery steps to the rim of a great dome of glass. Round this they went. Far below a number of people seemed to be dancing, and music filtered through the dome. . . . Graham fancied he heard a shouting through the snowstorm, and his guide hurried him on with a new spurt of haste. They clambered panting to a space of huge windmills, one so vast that only the lower edge of its vans came rushing into sight and rushed up again and was lost in the night and the snow. They hurried for a time through the colossal metallic tracery of its supports, and came at last above a place of moving platforms like the place into which Graham had looked from the balcony. They crawled across the sloping transparency that covered this street of platforms, crawling on hands and knees because of the slipperiness of the snowfall.

For the most part the glass was bedewed, and Graham saw only hazy suggestions of the forms below, but near the pitch of the transparent roof the glass was clear, and he found himself looking sheerly down upon it all. For awhile, in spite of the urgency of his guide, he gave way to vertigo and lay spread-eagled on the glass, sick and paralyzed. Far below, mere stirring specks and dots, went the people of the unsleeping city in their perpetual daylight, and the moving platforms ran on their incessant journey. Messengers and men on unknown businesses shot along the drooping cables and the frail bridges were crowded with men. It was like peering into a gigantic glass hive, and it lay vertically below him with only a tough glass of unknown thickness to save him from a fall. The street showed warm and lit, and Graham was wet now to the skin with thawing snow, and his feet were numbed with cold. For a space he could not move. "Come on!" cried his guide, with terror in his voice. "Come on!"

Graham reached the pitch of the roof by an effort.

Over the ridge, following his guide's example, he turned about and slid backward down the opposite slope very swiftly, amid a little avalanche of snow. While he was sliding he thought of what would happen if some broken gap should come in his way. At the edge he stumbled to his feet ankle deep in slush, thanking heaven for an opaque footing again. His guide was already clambering up a metal screen to a level expanse.

Through the spare snowflakes above this loomed another line of vast windmills, and then suddenly the amorphous tumult of the rotating wheels was pierced with a deafening sound. It was a mechanical shrilling of extraordinary intensity that seemed to come simultaneously from every point of the compass.

"They have missed us already!" cried Graham's guide in an accent of terror, and suddenly, with a blinding flash, the night became day.

Above the driving snow, from the summits of the wind-wheels, appeared vast masts carrying globes of livid light. They receded in illimitable vistas in every

direction. As far as his eye could penetrate the snow-fall, they glided.

"Get on this," cried Graham's conductor, and thrust him forward to a long grating of snowless metal that ran like a band between two slightly sloping expanses of snow. It felt warm to Graham's benumbed feet, and a faint eddy of steam rose from it.

"Come on!" shouted his guide ten yards off, and, without waiting, ran swiftly through the incandescent glare towards the iron supports of the next range of wind-wheels. Graham, recovering from his astonishment, followed as fast, convinced of his imminent capture.

In a score of seconds they were within a tracery of glare and black shadows shot with moving bars beneath the monstrous wheels. Graham's conductor ran on for some time, and suddenly darted sideways and vanished into a black shadow in the corner of the foot of a huge support. In another moment Graham was beside him.

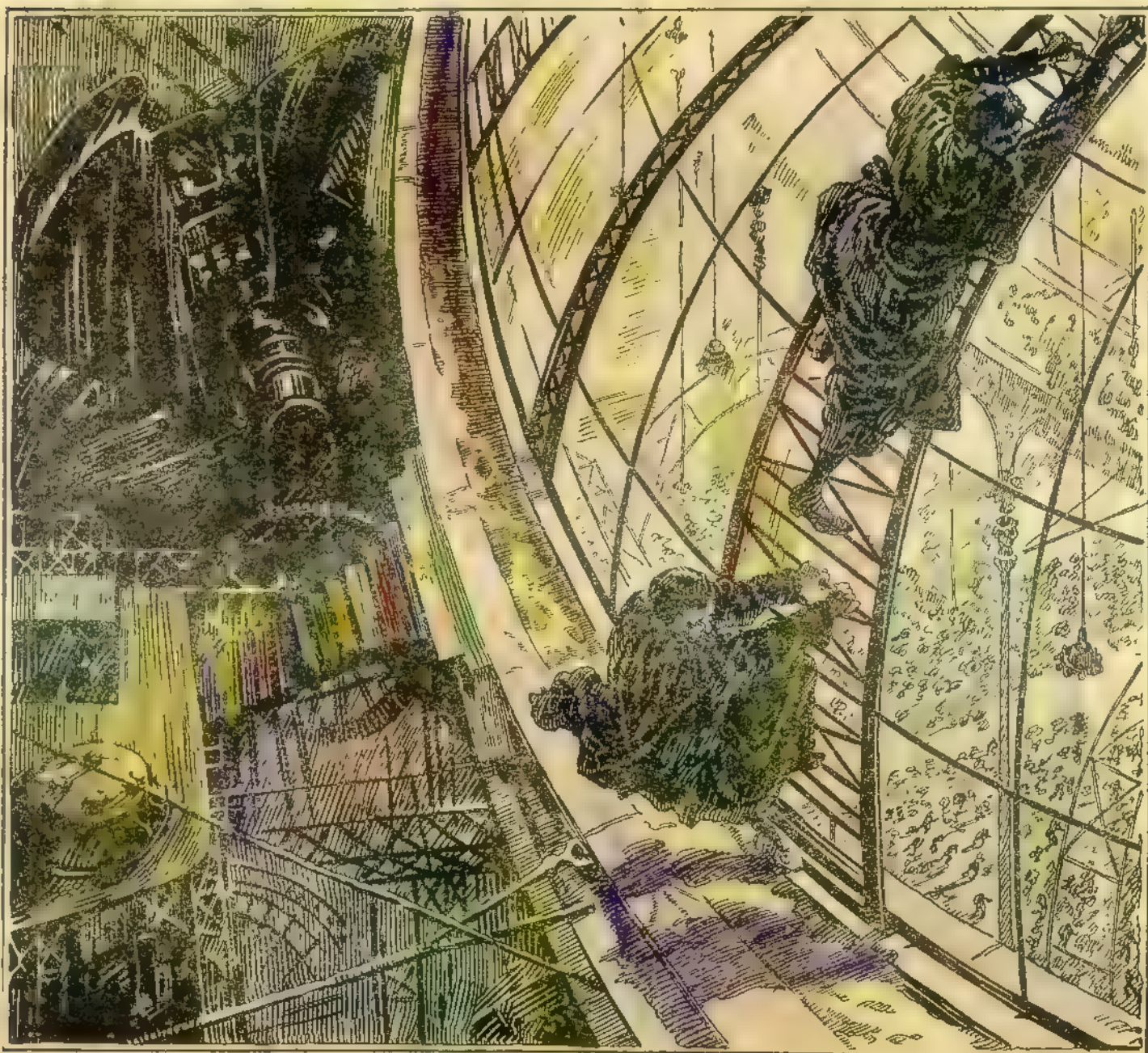
They cowered panting and stared out.

THE scene upon which Graham looked was very wild and strange. The snow had now almost ceased;

only a belated flake passed now and again across the picture. But the broad stretch of level before them was a ghastly white, broken only by gigantic masses and moving shapes and lengthy strips of impenetrable darkness, vast ungainly Titans of shadow. All about them, huge metallic structures, iron girders, inhumanly vast as it seemed to him, interlaced, and the edges of wind-wheels, scarcely moving in the lull, passed in great shining curves steeper and steeper up into a luminous haze. Wherever the snow-spangled light struck down, beams and girders, and incessant bands running with a halting, indomitable resolution, passed upward and downward into the black. And with all that mighty activity, with an omnipresent sense of motive and design, this snow-clad desolation of mechanism seemed void of all human presence save themselves, seemed as trackless and deserted and unfrequented by men as some inaccessible Alpine snowfield.

"They will be chasing us," cried the leader. "We are scarcely halfway there yet. Cold as it is we must hide here for a space—at least until it snows more thickly again."

His teeth chattered in his head.



Clamber up the ladder—quick!

"Where are the markets?" asked Graham staring out. "Where are all the people?"

The other made no answer.

"Look!" whispered Graham, crouched close, and became very still.

The snow had suddenly become thick again, and sliding with the whirling eddies out of the black pit of the sky came something, vague and large and very swift. It came down in a steep curve and swept round, wide wings extended and a trail of white condensing steam behind it, rose with an easy swiftness and went gliding up the air, swept horizontally forward in a wide curve, and vanished again in the steaming specks of snow. And, through the ribs of its body, Graham saw two little men, very minute and active, searching the snowy areas about him, as it seemed to him, with field glasses. For a second they were clear, then hazy through a thick whirl of snow, then small and distant, and in a minute they were gone.

"Now!" cried his companion. "Come!"

He pulled Graham's sleeve, and incontinently the two were running headlong down the arcade of ironwork beneath the wind-wheels. Graham, running blindly, collided with his leader, who had turned back on him suddenly. He found himself within a dozen yards of a black chasm. It extended as far as he could see right and left. It seemed to cut off their progress in either direction.

"Do as I do," whispered his guide. He lay down and crawled to the edge, thrust his head over and twisted until one leg hung. He seemed to feel for something with his foot, found it, and went sliding over the edge into the gulf. His head reappeared. "It is a ledge," he whispered. "In the dark all the way along. Do as I did."

Graham hesitated, went down upon all fours, crawled to the edge, and peered into a velvety blackness. For a sickly moment he had courage neither to go on nor retreat, then he sat and hung his leg down, felt his guide's hands pulling at him, had a horrible sensation of sliding over the edge into the unfathomable, splashed, and felt himself in a slushy gutter, impenetrably dark.

"This way," whispered the voice, and he began crawling along the gutter through the trickling thaw, pressing himself against the wall. They continued along it for some minutes. He seemed to pass through a hundred stages of misery, to pass minute after minute through a hundred degrees of cold, damp, and exhaustion. In a little while he ceased to feel his hands and feet.

The gutter sloped downwards. He observed that they were now many feet below the edge of the buildings. Rows of spectral white shapes like the ghosts of blind-drawn windows rose above them. They came to the end of a cable fastened above one of these white windows, dimly visible and dropping into impenetrable shadows. Suddenly his hand came against his guide's. "Still!" whispered the latter very softly.

He looked up with a start and saw the huge wings of the flying machine gliding slowly and noiselessly overhead athwart the broad band of snow-flecked grey-blue sky. In a moment it was hidden again.

"Keep still; they were just turning."

For awhile both were motionless, then Graham's companion stood up, and reaching towards the fastenings of the cable fumbled with some indistinct tackle.

"What is that?" asked Graham.

The only answer was a faint cry. The man crouched motionless. Graham peered and saw his face dimly. He was staring down the long ribbon of sky, and Graham, following his eyes, saw the flying machine small and faint and remote. Then he saw that the wings spread on either side, that it headed towards them, that every

moment it grew larger. It was following the edge of the chasm towards them.

The man's movements became convulsive. He thrust two cross bars into Graham's hand. Graham could not see them, he ascertained their form by feeling. They were slung by thin cords to the cable. On the cord were hand grips of some soft elastic substance. "Put the cross between your legs," whispered the guide hysterically, "and grip the holdfasts. Grip tightly, grip!"

Graham did as he was told.

"Jump," said the voice. "In heaven's name, jump!"

For one momentous second Graham could not speak. He was glad afterwards that darkness hid his face. He said nothing. He began to tremble violently. He looked sideways at the swift shadow that swallowed up the sky as it rushed upon him.

"Jump! Jump—in God's name! Or they will have us," cried Graham's guide, and in the violence of his passion thrust him forward.

Graham tottered convulsively, gave a sobbing cry, a cry in spite of himself, and then, as the flying machine swept over them, fell forward into the pit of that darkness, seated on the cross wood and holding the ropes with the clutch of death. Something cracked, something rapped smartly against a wall. He heard the pulley of the cradle hum on its rope. He heard the aeronauts shout. He felt a pair of knees digging into his back. . . . He was sweeping headlong through the air, falling through the air. All his strength was in his hands. He would have screamed but he had no breath.

He shot into a blinding light that made him grip the tighter. He recognized the great passage with the running ways, the hanging lights and interlacing girders. They rushed upward and by him. He had a momentary impression of a great circular aperture yawning to swallow him up.

He was in the dark again, falling, falling, gripping with aching hands, and behold! a clap of sound, a burst of light, and he was in a brightly lit hall with a roaring multitude of people beneath his feet. The people! His people! A proscenium, a stage rushed up towards him, and his cable swept down to a circular aperture to the right of this. He felt he was travelling slower, and suddenly very much slower. He distinguished shouts of "Saved! The Master. He is safe!" The stage rushed up towards him with rapidly diminishing swiftness. Then—

He heard the man clinging behind him shout as if suddenly terrified, and this shout was echoed by a shout from below. He felt that he was no longer gliding along the cable but falling with it. There was a tumult of yells, screams and cries. He felt something soft against his extended hand, and the impact of a broken fall quivering through his arm. . . .

He wanted to be still and the people were lifting him. He believed afterwards he was carried to the platform and given some drink, but he was never sure. He did not notice what became of his guide. When his mind was clear again he was on his feet; eager hands were assisting him to stand. He was in a big alcove, occupying the position that in his previous experience had been devoted to the lower boxes. If this was indeed a theatre.

A mighty tumult was in his ears, a thunderous roar, the shouting of a countless multitude. "It is the Sleeper! The Sleeper is with us!"

"The Sleeper is with us! The Master—the Owner! The Master is with us. He is safe."

Graham had a surging vision of a great hall crowded with people. He saw no individuals, he was conscious of a froth of pink faces, of waving arms and garments, he felt the occult influence of a vast crowd pouring over him, buoying him up. There were balconies, galleries, great archways giving remoter perspectives, and everywhere people, a vast arena of people, densely packed and

cheering. Across the nearer space lay the collapsed cable like a huge snake. It had been cut by the men of the flying machine at its upper end, and had crumpled down into the hall. Men seemed to be hauling this out of the way. But the whole effect was vague, the very buildings throbbed and leapt with the roar of the voices.

He stood unsteadily and looked at those about him. Someone supported him by one arm. "Let me go into a little room," he said, weeping; "a little room," and could say no more. A man in black stepped forward, took his disengaged arm. He was aware of officious men opening a door before him. Someone guided him to a seat. He staggered. He sat down heavily and covered his face with his hands; he was trembling violently, his nervous control was at an end. He was relieved of his cloak, he could not remember how; his purple hose he saw were black with wet. People were running about him, things were happening, but for some time he gave no heed to them.

He had escaped. A myriad of cries told him that. He was safe. These were the people who were on his side. For a space he sobbed for breath, and then he sat still with his face covered. The air was full of the shouting of innumerable men.

CHAPTER IX

The People March

HE became aware of someone urging a glass of clear fluid upon his attention, looked up and discovered this was a dark young man in a yellow garment. He took the dose forthwith, and in a moment he was glowing. A tall man in a black robe stood by his shoulder, and pointed to the half open door into the hall. This man was shouting close to his ear and yet what was said was indistinct because of the tremendous uproar from the great theatre. Behind the man was a girl in a silvery grey robe, whom Graham, even in this confusion, perceived to be beautiful. Her dark eyes, full of wonder and curiosity were fixed on him, her lips trembled apart. A partially opened door gave a glimpse of the crowded hall, and admitted a vast uneven tumult, a hammering, clapping and shouting that died away and began again, and rose to a thunderous pitch, and so continued intermittently all the time that Graham remained in the little room. He watched the lips of the man in black and gathered that he was making some clumsy explanation.

He stared stupidly for some moments at these things and then stood up abruptly; he grasped the arm of this shouting person.

"Tell me!" he cried. "Who am I? Who am I?"

The others came nearer to hear his words. "Who am I?" His eyes searched their faces.

"They have told him nothing!" cried the girl.

"Tell me, tell me!" cried Graham.

"You are the Master of the Earth. You are owner of half the world."

He did not believe he heard aright. He resisted the persuasion. He pretended not to understand, not to hear. He lifted his voice again. "I have been awake three days—a prisoner three days. I judge there is some struggle between a number of people in this city—it is London?"

"Yes," said the younger man.

"And those who meet in the great hall with the white Atlas? How does it concern me? In some way it has to do with me. *Why*, I don't know. Drugs? It seems to me that while I have slept the world has gone mad. I have gone mad.

"Who are those Councillors under the Atlas? Why should they try to drug me?"

"To keep you insensible," said the man in yellow. "To prevent your interference."

"But *why*?"

"Because *you* are the Atlas, Sire," said the man in

yellow. "The world is on your shoulders. They rule it in your name."

The sounds from the hall had died into a silence threaded by one monotonous voice. Now suddenly, tramping on these last words, came a deafening tumult, a roaring and thundering, cheer crowded on cheer, voices hoarse and shrill, beating, overlapping, and while it lasted the people in the little room could not hear each other shout.

Graham stood, his intelligence clinging helplessly to the thing he had just heard. "The Council," he repeated blankly, and then snatched at a name that had struck him. "But who is Ostrog?" he said.

"He is the organizer—the organizer of the revolt. Our Leader—in your name."

"In my name?—And you? Why is he not here?"

"He—has deputed us. I am his brother—his half-brother, Lincoln. He wants you to show yourself to these people and then come on to him. That is why he has sent us. He is at the wind-vane offices directing. The people are marching."

"In your name," shouted the younger man. "They have ruled, crushed, tyrannized. At last even—"

"In my name! My name! Master?"

The younger man suddenly became audible in a pause of the outer thunder, indignant and vociferous, a high penetrating voice under his red aquiline nose and bushy moustache. "No one expected you to wake. No one expected you to wake. They were cunning. Damned tyrants! But they were taken by surprise. They did not know whether to drug you, hypnotize you, kill you."

Again the hall dominated everything.

"Ostrog is at the wind-vane offices ready—. Even now there is a rumor of fighting beginning."

The man who had called himself Lincoln came close to him. "Ostrog has it planned. Trust him. We have our organizations ready. We shall seize the flying stages—. Even now he may be doing that. Then—"

"This public theatre," bawled the man in yellow, "is only a contingent. We have five myriads of drilled men—"

"We have arms," cried Lincoln. "We have plans. A leader. Their police have gone from the streets and are massed in the—" (inaudible). "It is now or never. The Council is rocking— They cannot trust even their drilled men—"

"Hear the people calling to you!"

Graham's mind was like a night of moon and swift clouds, now dark and hopeless, now clear and ghastly. He was Master of the Earth, he was a man sodden with thawing snow. Of all his fluctuating impressions the dominant ones presented an antagonism; on the one hand was the White Council, powerful, disciplined, few, the White Council from which he had just escaped; and on the other, monstrous crowds, packed masses of indistinguishable people clamoring his name, hailing him Master. The other side had imprisoned him, debated his death. These shouting thousands beyond the little doorway had rescued him. But why these things should be so he could not understand.

The door opened, Lincoln's voice was swept away and drowned, and a rush of people followed on the heels of the tumult. These intruders came towards him and Lincoln gesticulating. The voices without explained their soundless lips. "Show us the Sleeper, show us the Sleeper!" was the burden of the uproar. Men were bawling for "Order! Silence!"

Graham glanced towards the open doorway, and saw a tall, oblong picture of the hall beyond, a waving, incessant confusion of crowded, shouting faces, men and women together, waving pale blue garments, extended hands. Many were standing, one man in rags of dark brown, a gaunt figure, stood on the seat and waved a black cloth. He met the wonder and expectation of the

girl's eyes. What did these people expect from him. He was dimly aware that the tumult outside had changed its character, was in some way beating, marching. His own mind, too, changed. For a space he did not recognize the influence that was transforming him. But a moment that was near to panic passed. He tried to make audible inquiries of what was required of him.

Lincoln was shouting in his ear, but Graham was deafened to that. All the others save the woman gesticulated towards the hall. He perceived what had happened to the uproar. The whole mass of people was chanting together. It was not simply a song, the voices were gathered together and upborne by a torrent of instrumental music, music like the music of an organ, a woven texture of sounds, full of trumpets, full of flaunting banners, full of the march and pageantry of opening war. And the feet of the people were beating time—tramp, tramp.

He was urged towards the door. He obeyed mechanically. The strength of that chaat took hold of him, stirred him, emboldened him. The hall opened to him, a vast welter of fluttering color swaying to the music.

"Wave your arm to them," said Lincoln. "Wave your arm to them."

"This," said a voice on the other side, "he must have this." Arms were about his neck detaining him in the doorway, and a black subtly-folding mantle hung from his shoulders. He threw his arm free of this and followed Lincoln. He perceived the girl in grey close to him, her face lit, her gesture onward. For the instant she became to him, flushed and eager as she was, an embodiment of the song. He emerged in the alcove again. Incontinently the mounting waves of the song broke upon his appearing, and flashed up into a foam of shouting. Guided by Lincoln's hand he marched obliquely across the centre of the stage facing the people.

THE hall was a vast and intricate space—galleries, balconies, broad spaces of amphitheatral steps, and great archways. Far away, high up, seemed the mouth of a huge passage full of struggling humanity. The whole multitude was swaying in congested masses. Individual figures sprang out of the tumult, impressed him momentarily, and lost definition again. Close to the platform swayed a beautiful fair woman, carried by three men, her hair across her face and brandishing a green staff. Next this group an old careworn man in blue canvas maintained his place in the crush with difficulty, and behind shouted a hairless face, a great cavity of toothless mouth. A voice called that enigmatical word "Ostrog." All his impressions were vague save the massive emotion of that trampling song. The multitude were beating time with their feet—marking time, tramp, tramp, tramp. The green weapons waved, flashed and slanted. Then he saw those nearest to him on a level space before the stage were marching in front of him, passing towards a great archway, shouting "To the Council!" Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp. He raised his arm, and the roaring was redoubled. He remembered he had to shout "March!" His mouth shaped inaudible heroic words. He waved his arm again and pointed to the archway, shouting "Onward!" They were no longer marking time, they were marching; tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp. In that host were bearded men, old men, youths, fluttering robed bare-armed women, girls. Men and women of the new age! Rich robes, grey rags fluttered together in the whirl of their movement amidst the dominant blue. A monstrous black banner jerked its way to the right. He perceived a blue-clad negro, a shrivelled woman in yellow, then a group of tall fair-haired, white-faced, blue-clad men pushed theatrically past him. He noted two Chinamen. A tall, sallow, dark-haired, shining-eyed youth, white clad from top to toe, clambered up

towards the platform shouting loyally, and sprang down again and receded, looking backward. Heads, shoulders, hands clutching weapons, all were swinging with those marching cadences.

Faces came out of the confusion to him as he stood there, eyes met his and passed and vanished. Men gesticulated to him, shouted inaudible personal things. Most of the faces were flushed, but many were ghastly white. And disease was there, and many a hand that waved to him was gaunt and lean. Men and women of the new age! Strange and incredible meeting! As the broad stream passed before him to the right, tributary gangways from the remote uplands of the hall thrust downward in an incessant replacement of people; tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp. The unison of the song was enriched and complicated by the massive echoes of arches and passages. Men and women mingled in the ranks; tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp. The whole world seemed marching. Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp; his brain was tramping. The garments waved onward, the faces poured by more abundantly.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp; at Lincoln's pressure he turned towards the archway, walking unconsciously in that rhythm, scarcely noticing his movement for the melody and stir of it. The multitude, the gesture and song, all moved in that direction, the flow of people smote downward until the upturned faces were below the level of his feet. He was aware of a path before him, of a suite about him, of guards and dignitaries, and Lincoln on his right hand. Attendants intervened, and ever and again blotted out the sight of the multitude to the left. Before him went the backs of the guards in black—three and three and three. He was marched along a little railed way, and crossed above the archway, with the torrent dipping to flow beneath, and shouting up to him. He did not know whither he went; he did not want to know. He glanced back across a flaming spaciousness of hall. Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp.

CHAPTER X

The Battle of the Darkness

HE was no longer in the hall. He was marching along a gallery overhanging one of the great streets of the moving platforms that traversed the city. Before him and behind him tramped his guards. The whole concave of the moving ways below was a congested mass of people marching, tramping to the left, shouting, waving hands and arms, pouring along a huge vista, shouting as they came into view, shouting as they passed, shouting as they receded, until the globes of electric light receding in perspective dropped down it seemed and hid the swarming bare heads. Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp.

The song roared up to Graham now, no longer upborne by music, but coarse and noisy, and the beating of the marching feet, tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp, interwove with a thunderous irregularity of footsteps from the undisciplined rabble that poured along the higher ways. Abruptly he noted a contrast. The buildings on the opposite side of the way seemed deserted, the cables and bridges that laced across the aisle were empty and shadowy. It came into Graham's mind that these also should have swarmed with people.

He felt a curious emotion—throbbing—very fast! He stopped again. The guards before him marched on; those about him stopped as he did. He saw the direction of their faces. The throbbing had something to do with the lights. He too looked up.

At first it seemed to him a thing that affected the lights simply, an isolated phenomenon, having no bearing on the things below. Each huge globe of blinding whiteness was as it were clutched, compressed in a systole that

was followed by a transitory diastole, and again a systole like a tightening grip, darkness, light, darkness, in rapid alternation.

Graham became aware that this strange behavior of the lights had to do with the people below. The appearance of the houses and ways, the appearance of the packed masses changed, became a confusion of vivid lights and leaping shadows. He saw a multitude of shadows had sprung into aggressive existence, seemed rushing up, broadening, widening, growing with steady swiftness—to leap suddenly back and return reinforced. The song and the tramping had ceased. The unanimous march, he discovered, was arrested, there were eddies, a flow sideways, shouts of "The lights!" Voices were crying together one thing. "The lights!" cried these voices. "The lights!" He looked down. In this dancing death of the lights the area of the street had suddenly become a monstrous struggle. The huge white globes became purple-white, purple with a reddish glow, flickered, flickered faster and faster, fluttered between light and extinction, ceased to flicker and became mere fading specks of glowing red in a vast obscurity. In ten seconds the extinction was accomplished, and there was only this roaring darkness, a black monstrosity that had suddenly swallowed up those glittering myriads of men.

He felt invisible forms about him; his arms were gripped. Something rapped sharply against his shin. A voice bawled in his ear, "It is all right—all right."

Graham shook off the paralysis of his first astonishment. He struck his forehead against Lincoln's and bawled, "What is this darkness?"

"The Council has cut the currents that light the city. We must wait—stop. The people will go on. They will—"

His voice was drowned. Voices were shouting, "Save the Sleeper. Take care of the Sleeper." A guard stumbled against Graham and hurt his hand by an inadvertent blow of his weapon. A wild tumult tossed and whirled about him, growing, as it seemed, louder, denser, more furious each moment. Fragments of recognizable sounds drove towards him, were whirled away from him as his mind reached out to grasp them. Voices seemed to be shouting conflicting orders, other voices answered. There were suddenly a succession of piercing screams close beneath them.

A voice bawled in his ear, "The red police," and receded forthwith beyond his questions.

A crackling sound grew to distinctness, and therewith a leaping of faint flashes along the edge of the further ways. By their light Graham saw the heads and bodies of a number of men, armed with weapons like those of his guards, leap into an instant's dim visibility. The whole area began to crackle, to flash with little instantaneous streaks of light, and abruptly the darkness rolled back like a curtain.

A glare of light dazzled his eyes, a vast seething expanse of struggling men confused his mind. A shout, a burst of cheering, came across the ways. He looked up to see the source of the light. A man hung far overhead from the upper part of a cable, holding by a rope the blinding star that had driven the darkness back. He wore a red uniform.

Graham's eyes fell to the ways again. A wedge of red a little way along the vista caught his eye. He saw it was a dense mass of red-clad men jammed on the higher further way, their backs against the pitiless cliff of building, and surrounded by a dense crowd of antagonists. They were fighting. Weapons flashed and rose and fell, heads vanished at the edge of the contest, and other heads replaced them, the little flashes from the green weapons became little jets of smoky grey while the light lasted.

ABRUPTLY the flare was extinguished and the ways were an inky darkness once more, a tumultuous mystery.

He felt something thrusting against him. He was being pushed along the gallery. Someone was shouting—it might be at him. He was too confused to hear. He was thrust against the wall, and a number of people blundered past him. It seemed to him that his guards were struggling with one another.

Suddenly the cable-hung star-holder appeared again, and the whole scene was white and dazzling. The band of red-coats seemed broader and nearer; its apex was half-way down the ways towards the central aisle. And raising his eyes Graham saw that a number of these men had also appeared now in the darkened lower galleries of the opposite building, and were firing over the heads of their fellows below at the boiling confusion of people on the lower ways. The meaning of these things dawned upon him. The march of the people had come upon an ambush at the very outset. Thrown into confusion by the extinction of the lights they were now being attacked by the red police. Then he became aware that he was standing alone, that his guards and Lincoln were along the gallery in the direction along which he had come before the darkness fell. He saw they were gesticulating to him wildly, running back towards him. A great shouting came from across the ways. Then it seemed as though the whole face of the darkened building opposite was lined and speckled with red-clad men. And they were pointing over to him and shouting. "The Sleeper! Save the Sleeper!" shouted a multitude of throats.

Something struck the wall above his head. He looked up at the impact and saw a star-shaped splash of silvery metal. He saw Lincoln near him. Felt his arm gripped. Then, pat, pat; he had been missed twice.

For a moment he did not understand this. The street was hidden, everything was hidden, as he looked. The second flare had burned out.

Lincoln had gripped Graham by the arm, was lugging him along the gallery. "Before the next light!" he cried. His haste was contagious. Graham's instinct of self-preservation overcame the paralysis of his incredulous astonishment. He became for a time the blind creature of the fear of death. He ran, stumbling because of the uncertainty of the darkness, blundered into his guards as they turned to run with him. Haste was his one desire, to escape this perilous gallery upon which he was exposed. A third glare came close on its predecessors. With it came a great shouting across the ways, an answering tumult from the ways. The red-coats below, he saw, had now almost gained the central passage. Their countless faces turned towards him, and they shouted. The white facade opposite was densely stippled with red. All these wonderful things concerned him, turned upon him as a pivot. These were the guards of the Council attempting to recapture him.

Lucky it was for him that these shots were the first fired in anger for a hundred and fifty years. He heard bullets whacking over his head, felt a splash of molten metal sting his ear, and perceived without looking that the whole opposite facade, an unmasked ambushade of red police, was crowded and bawling and firing at him.

Down went one of his guards before him, and Graham, unable to stop, leapt the writhing body.

In another second he had plunged, unhurt, into a black passage, and incontinently someone, coming, it may be, in a transverse direction, blundered violently into him. He was hurling down a staircase in absolute darkness. He reeled, and was struck again, and came against a wall with his hands. He was crushed by a weight of struggling bodies, whirled round, and thrust to the right. A vast pressure pinned him. He could not breathe, his ribs seemed cracking. He felt a momentary relaxation, and then the whole mass of people moving together, bore him back towards the great theatre from which he had so recently come. There were moments when his feet

did not touch the ground. Then he was staggering and shoving. He heard shouts of "They are coming!" and a muffled cry close to him. His foot blundered against something soft, he heard a hoarse scream under foot. He heard shouts of "The Sleeper!" but he was too confused to speak. He heard the green weapons crackling. For a space he lost his individual will, became an atom in a panic, blind, unthinking, mechanical. He thrust and pressed back and writhed in the pressure, kicked presently against a step, and found himself ascending a slope. And abruptly the faces all about him leapt out of the black, visible, ghastly white and astonished, terrified, perspiring, in a livid glare. One face, a young man's, was very near to him, not twenty inches away. At the time it was but a passing incident of no emotional value, but afterwards it came back to him in his dreams. For this young man, wedged upright in the crowd for a time, had been shot and was already dead.

A fourth white star must have been lit by the man on the cable. Its light came glaring in through vast windows and arches and showed Graham that he was now one of a dense mass of flying black figures pressed back across the lower area of the great theatre. This time the picture was livid and fragmentary, slashed and barred with black shadows. He saw that quite near to

him the red guards were fighting their way through the people. He could not tell whether they saw him. He looked for Lincoln and his guards. He saw Lincoln near the stage of the theatre surrounded in a crowd of black-badged revolutionaries, lifted up and staring to and fro as if seeking him. Graham perceived that he himself was near the opposite edge of the crowd, that behind him, separated by a barrier, sloped the now vacant seats of the theatre. A sudden idea came to him, and he began fighting his way towards the barrier. As he reached it the glare came to an end.

In a moment he had thrown off the great cloak that not only impeded his movements but made him conspicuous, and had slipped it from his shoulders. He heard someone trip in its folds. In another, he was scaling the barrier and had dropped into the blackness on the further side. Then feeling his way he came to the lower end of an ascending gangway. In the darkness the sound of firing ceased and the roar of feet and voices lulled. Then suddenly he came to an unexpected step and tripped and fell. As he did so pools and islands amidst the darkness about him leapt to vivid light again, the uproar surged louder and the glare of the fifth white star shone through the vast fenestrations of the theatre walls.



A wild tumult tossed and whirled about him.

He rolled over among some seats, heard a shouting and the whirring rattle of weapons, struggled up and was knocked back again, perceived that a number of black-badged men were all about him firing at the reds below, leaping from seat to seat, crouching among the seats to reload. Instinctively he crouched amidst the seats, as stray shots ripped the pneumatic cushions and cut bright slashes on their soft metal frames. Instinctively he marked the direction of the gangways, the most plausible way of escape for him so soon as the veil of darkness fell again.

A young man in faded blue garments came vaulting over the seats. "Hullo!" he said, with his flying feet within six inches of the crouching Sleeper's face.

He stared without any sign of recognition, turned to fire, fired, and, shouting, "To hell with the Council!" was about to fire again. Then it seemed to Graham that the half of this man's neck had vanished. A drop of moisture fell on Graham's cheek. The green weapon stopped half raised. For a moment the man stood still with his face suddenly expressionless, then he began to slant forward. His knees bent. Man and darkness fell together. At the sound of his fall Graham rose up and ran for his life until a step down to the gangway tripped him. He scrambled to his feet, turned up the gangway and ran on.

WHEN the sixth star glared he was already close to the yawning throat of a passage. He ran on the swifter for the light, entered the passage and turned a corner into absolute night again. He was knocked sideways, rolled over, and recovered his feet. He found himself one of a crowd of invisible fugitives pressing in one direction. His one thought now was their thought also; to escape out of this fighting. He thrust and struck, staggered, ran, was wedged tightly, lost ground and then was clear again.

For some minutes he was running through the darkness along a winding passage, and then he crossed some wide and open space, passed down a long incline, and came at last down a flight of steps to a level place. Many people were shouting, "They are coming! The guards are coming. They are firing. Get out of the fighting. The guards are firing. It will be safe in Seventh Way. Along here to Seventh Way!" There were women and children in the crowd as well as men. Men called names to him. The crowd converged on an archway, passed through a short throat and emerged on a wider space again, lit dimly. The black figures about him spread out and ran up what seemed in the twilight to be a gigantic series of steps. He followed. The people dispersed to the right and left. . . . He perceived that he was no longer in a crowd. He stopped near the highest step. Before him, on that level, were groups of seats

and a little kiosk. He went up to this and, stopping in the shadow of its eaves, looked about him panting.

Everything was vague and gray, but he recognized that these great steps were a series of platforms of the "ways," now motionless again. The platform slanted up on either side, and the tall buildings rose beyond, vast dim ghosts, their inscriptions and advertisements indistinctly seen, and up through the girders and cables was a faint interrupted ribbon of pallid sky. A number of people hurried by. From their shouts and voices, it seemed they were hurrying to join the fighting. Other less noisy figures flitted timidly among the shadows.

From very far away down the street he could hear the sound of a struggle. But it was evident to him that this was not the street into which the theatre opened. That former fight, it seemed, had suddenly dropped out of sound and hearing. And—grotesque thought!—they were fighting for him!

For a space he was like a man who pauses in the reading of a vivid book, and suddenly doubts what he had been taking unquestionably. At that time he had little mind for details; the whole effect was a huge astonishment. Oddly enough, while the flight from the Council prison, the great crowd in the hall, and the attack of the red police upon the swarming people were clearly present in his mind, it cost him an effort to piece in his awakening and to revive the meditative interval of the Silent Rooms. At first his memory leapt these things and took him back to the cascade at Pentargen quivering in the wind and all the sombre splendors of the sunlit Cornish coast. The contrast touched everything with unreality. And then the gap filled, and he began to comprehend his position.

It was no longer absolutely a riddle, as it had been in the Silent Rooms. At least he had the strange, bare outline now. He was in some way the owner of half the world, and great political parties

were fighting to possess him. On the one hand was the White Council, with its red police, set resolutely, it seemed, on the usurpation of his property and perhaps his murder; on the other, the revolution that had liberated him, with this unseen "Ostrog" as its leader. And the whole of this gigantic city was convulsed by their struggle. Frantic development of his world! "I do not understand," he cried. "I do not understand!"

He had slipped out between the contending parties into this liberty of the twilight. What would happen next? What was happening? He figured the red-clad men as busily hunting him, driving the black-badged revolutionists before them.

At any rate chance had given him a breathing space. He could lurk unchallenged by the passers-by, and watch the course of things. His eye followed up the intricate



A small, hunched-up figure.

dim immensity of the twilight buildings, and it came to him as a thing infinitely wonderful, that above there the sun was rising, and the world was lit and glowing with the old familiar light of day. In a little while he had recovered his breath. His clothing had already dried upon him from the snow.

He wandered for miles along these twilight ways, speaking to no one, accosted by no one—a dark figure among dark figures—the coveted man out of the past, the inestimable unintentional owner of half the world. Wherever there were lights or dense crowds, or exceptional excitement he was afraid of recognition, and watched and turned back or went up and down by the middle stairways, into some transverse system of ways at a lower or higher level. And though he came on no more fighting, the whole city stirred with battle. Once he had to run to avoid a marching multitude of men that swept the street. Everyone abroad seemed involved. For the most part they were men, and they carried what he judged were weapons. It seemed as though the struggle was concentrated mainly in the quarter of the city from which he came. Ever and again a distant roaring, the remote suggestion of that conflict, reached his ears. Then his caution and his curiosity struggled together. But his caution prevailed, and he continued wandering away from the fighting—so far as he could judge. He went unmolested, unsuspected through the dark. After a time he ceased to hear even a remote echo of the battle, fewer and fewer people passed him, until at last the Titanic streets became deserted. The frontages of the buildings grew plain and harsh; he seemed to have come to a district of vacant warehouses. Solitude crept upon him—his pace slackened.

He became aware of a growing fatigue. At times he would turn aside and seat himself on one of the numerous seats of the upper ways. But a feverish restlessness, the knowledge of his vital implication in this struggle, would not let him rest in any place for long. Was the struggle on his behalf alone?

And then in a desolate place came the shock of an earthquake—a roaring and thundering—a mighty wind of cold air pouring through the city, the smash of glass, the slip and thud of falling masonry—a series of gigantic concussions. A mass of glass and ironwork fell from the remote roofs into the middle gallery, not a hundred yards away from him, and in the distance were shouts and running. He, too, was startled to an aimless activity, and ran first one way and then as aimlessly back.

A man came running towards him. His self-control returned. "What have they blown up?" asked the man breathlessly. "That was an explosion," and before Graham could speak he had hurried on.

The great buildings rose dimly, veiled by a perplexing twilight, albeit the rivulet of sky above was now bright with day. He noted many strange features, understanding none at the time; he even spelt out many of the inscriptions in Phonetic lettering. But what profits it to decipher a confusion of odd-looking letters resolving itself, after painful strain of eye and mind, into "Here is Eadhamite," or "Labor Bureau—Little Side?" Grotesque thought, that in all probability some or all of these cliff-like houses were his!

The perversity of his experience came to him vividly. In actual fact he had made such a leap in time as romancers have imagined again and again. And that fact realized, he had been prepared, his mind had, as it were, seated itself for a spectacle. And no spectacle, but a great vague danger, unsympathetic shadows and veils of darkness. Somewhere through the labyrinthine obscurity his death sought him. Would he, after all, be killed before he saw? It might be that even at the next shadowy corner his destruction ambushed. A great desire to see, a great longing to know, arose in him.

He became fearful of corners. It seemed to him that there was safety in concealment. Where could he hide to be inconspicuous when the lights returned? At last he sat down upon a seat in a recess on one of the higher ways, conceiving he was alone there.

He squeezed his knuckles into his weary eyes. Suppose when he looked again he found the dark trough of parallel ways and that intolerable altitude of edifice, gone? Suppose he were to discover the whole story of these last few days, the awakening, the shouting multitudes, the darkness and the fighting, a phantasmagoria, a new and more vivid sort of dream. It must be a dream; it was so inconsecutive, so reasonless. Why were the people fighting for him? Why should this saner world regard him as Owner and Master?

So he thought, sitting blinded, and then he looked again, half hoping in spite of his ears to see some familiar aspect of the life of the nineteenth century, to see, perhaps, the little harbor of Boscastle about him, the cliffs of Pentargen, or the bedroom of his home. But fact takes no heed of human hopes. A squad of men with a black banner tramped athwart the nearer shadows, intent on conflict, and beyond rose that giddy wall of frontage, vast and dark, with the dim incomprehensible lettering showing faintly on its face.

"It is no dream," he said, "no dream." And he bowed his face upon his hands.

CHAPTER XI

The Old Man Who Knew Everything

HE was startled by a cough close at hand. He turned sharply, and peering, saw a small, hunched-up figure sitting a couple of yards off in the shadow of the enclosure.

"Have ye any news?" asked the high-pitched wheezy voice of a very old man.

Graham hesitated. "None," he said.

"I stay here till the lights come again," said the old man. "These blue scoundrels are everywhere—everywhere."

Graham's answer was inarticulate assent. He tried to see the old man but the darkness hid his face. He wanted very much to respond, to talk, but he did not know how to begin.

"Dark and damnable," said the old man suddenly. "Dark and damnable. Turned out of my room among all these dangers."

"That's hard," ventured Graham. "That's hard on you."

"Darkness. An old man lost in the darkness. And all the world gone mad. War and fighting. The police beaten and rogues abroad. Why don't they bring some negroes to protect us? . . . No more dark passages for me. I fell over a dead man."

"You're safer with company," said the old man, "if it's company of the right sort," and peered frankly. He rose suddenly and came towards Graham.

Apparently the scrutiny was satisfactory. The old man sat down as if relieved to be no longer alone. "Eh!" he said, "but this is a terrible time! War and fighting, and the dead lying there—men, strong men, dying in the dark. Sons! I have three sons. God knows where they are tonight."

The voice ceased. Then repeated quavering: "God knows where they are tonight."

Graham stood revolving a question that should not betray his ignorance. Again the old man's voice ended the pause.

"This Ostrog will win," he said. "He will win. And what the world will be like under him no one can tell. My sons are under the wind-vanes, all three. One of my daughters-in-law was his mistress for a while. His mistress! We're not common people. Though they've

sent me to wander tonight and take my chance. . . . I knew what was going on. Before most people. But this darkness! And to fall over a dead body suddenly in the dark!"

His wheezy breathing could be heard.

"Ostrog!" said Graham.

"The greatest Boss the world has ever seen," said the voice.

Graham ransacked his mind. "The Council has few friends among the people," he hazarded.

"Few friends. And poor ones at that. They've had their time. Eh! They should have kept to the clever ones. But twice they held election. And Ostrog—. And now it has burst out and nothing can stay it, nothing can stay it. Twice they rejected Ostrog—Ostrog the Boss. I heard of his rages at the time—he was terrible. Heaven save them! For nothing on earth can, now he has raised the Labor Companies upon them. No one else would have dared. All the blue canvas armed and marching! He will go through with it. He will go through."

He was silent for a little while. "This Sleeper," he said, and stopped.

"Yes," said Graham. "Well?"

The senile voice sank to a confidential whisper, the dim, pale face came close. "The real Sleeper—"

"Yes," said Graham.

"Died years ago."

"What?" said Graham, sharply.

"Years ago. Died. Years ago."

"You don't say so!" said Graham.

"I do. I do say so. He died. This Sleeper who's woke up—they changed in the night. A poor drugged insensible creature. But I musn't tell all I know. I musn't tell all I know."

For a little while he muttered inaudibly. His secret was too much for him. "I don't know the ones that put him to sleep—that was before my time—but I know the man who injected the stimulants and woke him again. It was ten to one—wake or kill. Wake or kill. Ostrog's way."

Graham was so astonished at these things that he had to interrupt, to make the old man repeat his words, to re-question vaguely, before he was sure of the meaning and folly of what he heard. And his awakening had not been natural! Was that an old man's senile superstition, too, or had it any truth in it? Feeling in the dark corners of his memory, he presently came on something that might conceivably be an impression of some such stimulating effect. It dawned upon him that he had happened upon a lucky encounter, that at last he might learn something of the new age. The old man wheezed a while and spat, and then the piping, reminiscent voice resumed:

"The first time they rejected him. I've followed it all."

"Rejected whom?" said Graham. "The Sleeper?"

"Sleeper? No. Ostrog. He was terrible—terrible! And he was promised then, promised certainly the next time. Fools they were—not to be more afraid of him. Now all the city's his millstone, and such as we dust ground upon it. Dust ground upon it. Until he set to work—the workers cut each other's throats, and murdered a Chinaman or a Labor policeman at times, and left the rest of us in peace. Dead bodies! Robbing! Darkness! Such a thing hasn't been this gross of years. Eh!—but 'tis ill on small folks when the great fall out! It's ill."

"Did you say—there had not been—what?—for a gross of years?"

"Eh?" said the old man.

The old man said something about clipping his words, and made him repeat this a third time. "Fighting and slaying, and weapons in hand, and fools bawling freedom and the like," said the old man. "Not in all my life has

there been that. These are like the old days—for sure—when the Paris people broke out—three gross of years ago. That's what I mean hasn't been. But it's the world's way. It had to come back. I know. I know. This five years Ostrog has been working, and there has been trouble and trouble, and hunger and threats and high talk and arms. Blue canvas and murmurs. No one safe. Everything sliding and slipping. And now here we are! Revolt and fighting, and the Council come to its end."

"You are rather well-informed in these things," said Graham.

"I know what I hear. It isn't all Babble Machine with me."

"No," said Graham, wondering what Babble Machine might be. "And you are certain this Ostrog—you are certain Ostrog organized this rebellion and arranged for the waking of the Sleeper? Just to assert himself—because he was not elected to the Council?"

"Everyone knows that, I should think," said the old man. "Except—just fools. He meant to be master somehow. In the Council or not. Everyone who knows anything knows that. And here we are with dead bodies lying in the dark! Why, where have you been if you haven't heard all about the trouble between Ostrog and the Verneys? And what do you think the troubles are about? The Sleeper. Eh? You think the Sleeper's real and woke of his own accord—eh?"

"I'm a dull man, older than I look, and forgetful," said Graham. "Lots of things that have happened—especially of late years—. If I was the Sleeper, to tell you the truth, I couldn't know less about them."

"Eh!" said the voice. "Old, are you? You don't sound so very old! But it's not everyone keeps his memory to my time of life—truly. But these notorious things! But you're not so old as me—not nearly so old as me. Well! I ought not to judge other men by myself, perhaps. I'm young—for so old a man. Maybe you're old for so young."

"That's it," said Graham. "And I've a queer history. I know very little. And history! Practically I know no history. The Sleeper and Julius Caesar are all the same to me. It's interesting to hear you talk of these things."

"I know a few things," said the old man. "I know a thing or two. But—. Hark!"

THE two men became silent, listening. There was a heavy thud, a concussion that made their seat shiver. The passers-by stopped, shouted to one another. The old man was full of questions; he shouted to a man who passed near. Graham, emboldened by his example, got up and accosted others. None knew what had happened.

He returned to the seat and found the old man muttering vague interrogations in an undertone. For a while they said nothing to one another.

The sense of this gigantic struggle, so near and yet so remote oppressed Graham's imagination. Was this old man right, was the report of the people right, and were the revolutionaries winning? Or were they all in error, and were the red guards driving all before them? At any time the flood of warfare might pour into this silent quarter of the city and seize upon him again. It behooved him to learn all he could while there was time. He turned suddenly to the old man with a question and left it unsaid. But his motion moved the old man to speech again.

"Eh! but how things work together!" said the old man. "This Sleeper that all the fools put their trust in! I've the whole history of it—I was always a good one for histories. When I was a boy—I'm that old—I used to read printed books. You'd hardly think it. Likely you've seen none—they rot and dust so—and the Sanitary Com-

pany burns them to make ashlarite. But they were convenient in their dirty way. One learnt a lot. These new-fangled Babble Machines—they don't seem new-fangled to you, eh?—they're easy to hear, easy to forget. But I've traced all the Sleeper business from the first."

"You will scarcely believe it," said Graham slowly, "I'm so ignorant—I've been so preoccupied in my own little affairs, my circumstances have been so odd—I know nothing of this Sleeper's history. Who was he?"

"Eh!" said the old man. "I know. I know. He was a poor nobody, and set on a playful woman, poor soul! And he fell into a trance. There's the old things they had, those brown things—silver photographs—still showing him as he lay, a gross and a half years ago—a gross and a half of years."

"Set on a playful woman, poor soul," said Graham softly to himself, and then aloud, "Yes—well! go on."

"You must know he had a cousin named Warming, a solitary man without children, who made a big fortune speculating in roads—the first Eadhamite roads. But surely you've heard? No? Why? He bought all the patent rights and made a big company. In those days there were grosses of grosses of separate businesses and business companies. Grosses of grosses! His roads killed the railroads—the old things—in two dozen years; he bought up and Eadhamited the tracks. And because he didn't want to break up his great property or let in shareholders, he left it all to the Sleeper, and put it under a Board of Trustees that he had picked and trained. He knew then the Sleeper wouldn't wake, that he would go on sleeping, sleeping till he died. He knew that quite well! And plump! a man in the United States, who had lost two sons in a boat accident, followed that up with another great bequest. His trustees found themselves with a dozen myriads of lions' worth or more of property at the very beginning."

"What was his name?"

"Graham."

"No—I mean—that American's."

"Isbister."

"Isbister!" cried Graham. "Why, I don't even know the name."

"Of course not," said the old man. "Of course not. People don't learn much in the school nowadays. But I know all about him. He was a rich American who went from England, and he left the Sleeper even more than Warming. How he made it? That I don't know. Something about pictures by machinery. But he made it and left it, and so the Council had its start. It was just a council of trustees at first."

"And how did it grow?"

"Eh!—but you're not up to things. Money attracts money—and twelve brains are better than one. They played it cleverly. They worked politics with money, and kept on adding to the money by working currency and tariffs. They grew—they grew. And for years the twelve trustees hid the growing of the Sleeper's estate, under double names and company titles and all that. The Council spread by title deed, mortgage, share, every political party, every newspaper, they bought. If you listen to the old stories you will see the Council growing and growing. Billions and billions of lions at last—the Sleeper's estate. And all growing out of a whim—out of this Warming's will, and an accident to Isbister's sons."

"Men are strange," said the old man. "The strange thing to me is how the Council worked together so long. As many as twelve. But they worked in cliques from the first. And they've slipped back. In my young days speak of the Council was like an ignorant man speaking of God. We didn't think they could do wrong. We didn't know of their women and all that! Or else I've got wiser."

"Men are strange," said the old man. "Here are you, young and ignorant, and me—sevendy years old, and I

might reasonably be forgetting—explaining it all to you short and clear."

"Sevendy," he said, "sevendy, and I hear and see—hear better than I see. And reason clearly, and keep myself up to all the happenings of things. Sevendy!"

"Life is strange. I was twaindy before Ostrog was a baby. I remember him long before he'd pushed his way to the head of the Wind Vanes Control. I've seen many changes. Eh! I've worn the blue. And at last I've come to see this crush and darkness and tumult and dead men carried by in heaps on the ways. And all his doing! All his doing!"

His voice died away in scarcely articulate praises of Ostrog.

Graham thought. "Let me see," he said, "if I have it right."

He extended a hand and ticked off points upon his fingers. "The Sleeper has been asleep—"

"Changed," said the old man.

"Perhaps. And meanwhile the Sleeper's property grew in the hands of Twelve Trustees, until it swallowed up nearly all the great ownership of the world. The Twelve Trustees—by virtue of this property have become virtually masters of the world. Because they are the paying power—just as the old English Parliament used to be—"

"Eh!" said the old man. "That's so—that's a good comparison. You're not so—"

"And now this Ostrog—has suddenly revolutionized the world by waking the Sleeper—who, no one but the superstitious, common people had ever dreamt would wake again—raising the Sleeper to claim his property from the Council, after all these years."

The old man endorsed this statement with a cough. "It's strange," he said, "to meet a man who learns these things for the first time tonight."

"Aye," said Graham, "it's strange."

"Have you been in a Pleasure City?" said the old man. "All my life I've longed—" He laughed. "Even now," he said, "I could enjoy a little fun. Enjoy seeing things, anyhow." He mumbled a sentence Graham did not understand.

"THE Sleeper—when did he awake?" said Graham suddenly.

"Three days ago."

"Where is he?"

"Ostrog has him. He escaped from the Council not four hours ago. My dear sir, where were you at the time? He was in the hall of the markets—where the fighting has been. All the city was screaming about it. All the Babble Machines. Everywhere it was shouted. Even the fools who speak for the Council were admitting it. Everyone was rushing off to see him—everyone was getting arms. Were you drunk or asleep? And even then! But you're joking! Surely you're pretending. It was to stop the shouting of the Babble Machines and prevent the people gathering that they turned off the electricity—and put this damned darkness upon us. Do you mean to say—?"

"I had heard the Sleeper was rescued," said Graham. "But—to come back a minute. Are you sure Ostrog has him?"

"He won't let him go," said the old man.

"And the Sleeper. Are you sure he is not genuine? I have never heard—"

"So all the fools think. So they think. As if there wasn't a thousand things that were never heard. I know Ostrog too well for that. Did I tell you? In a way I'm a sort of relation of Ostrog's. A sort of relation. Through my daughter-in-law."

"I suppose—"

"Well?"

"I suppose there's no chance of this Sleeper asserting himself. I suppose he's certain to be a puppet—in Ostrog's hands or the Council's, as soon as the struggle is over."

"In Ostrog's hands—certainly. Why shouldn't he be a puppet? Look at his position. Everything done for him, every pleasure possible. Why should he want to assert himself?"

"What are these Pleasure Cities?" said Graham, abruptly.

The old man made him repeat the question. When at last he was assured of Graham's words, he nudged him violently. "That's *too much*," said he. "You're poking fun at an old man. I've been suspecting you know more than you pretend."

"Perhaps I do," said Graham. "But no! why should I go on acting? No, I do not know what a Pleasure City is."

The old man laughed in an intimate way.

"What is more, I do not know how to read your letters, I do not know what money you use, I do not know what foreign countries there are. I do not know where I am. I cannot count. I do not know where to get food, nor drink, nor shelter."

"Come, come," said the old man, "if you had a glass of drink, now, would you put it in your ear or your eye?"

"I want you to tell me all these things."

"He, he! Well, gentlemen who dress in silk must have their fun." A withered hand caressed Graham's arm for a moment. "Silk. Well, well! But, all the same, I wish I was the man who was put up as the Sleeper. He'll have a fine time of it. All the pomp and pleasure. He's a queer looking face. When they used to let anyone go to see him, I've got tickets and been. The image of the real one, as the photographs show him, this substitute used to be. Yellow. But he'll get fed up. It's a queer world. Think of the luck of it. The luck of it. I expect he'll be sent to Capri. It's the best fun for a greener."

His cough overtook him again. Then he began mumbling enviously of pleasures and strange delights. "The luck of it, the luck of it! All my life I've been in London, hoping to get my chance."

"But you don't know that the Sleeper died," said Graham, suddenly.

The old man made him repeat his words.

"Men don't live beyond ten dozen. It's not in the order of things," said the old man. "I'm not a fool. Fools may believe it, but not me."

Graham became angry with the old man's assurance. "Whether you are a fool or not," he said, "it happens you are wrong about the Sleeper."

"Eh?"

"You are wrong about the Sleeper. I haven't told you before, but I will tell you now. You are wrong about the Sleeper."

"How do you know? I thought you didn't know anything—not even about Pleasure Cities."

Graham paused.

"You don't know," said the old man. "How are you to know? It's very few men—"

"I am the Sleeper."

He had to repeat it.

There was a brief pause. "There's a silly thing to say, sir, if you'll excuse me. It might get you into trouble in a time like this," said the old man.

Graham, slightly dashed, repeated his assertion.

"I was saying I was the Sleeper. That years and years ago I did, indeed, fall asleep, in a little stone-built village, in the days when there were hedgerows, and villages, and inns, and all the countryside cut up into little pieces, little fields. Have you never heard of those days? And it is I—I who speak to you—who awakened again these four days since."

"Four days since!—the Sleeper! But they've got the

Sleeper. They have him and they won't let him go, Nonsense! You've been talking sensibly enough up to now. I can see it as though I was there. There will be Lincoln like a keeper just behind him; they won't let him go about alone. Trust them. You're a queer fellow. One of these fun pokers. I see now why you have been clipping your words so oddly, but—"

He stopped abruptly, and Graham could see his gesture.

"As if Ostrog would let the Sleeper run about alone! No, you're telling that to the wrong man altogether. Eh! as if I should believe. What's your game? And besides, we've been talking of the Sleeper."

Graham stood up. "Listen," he said. "I am the Sleeper."

"You're an odd man," said the old man, "to sit here in the dark, talking clipped, and telling a lie of that sort. But—"

Graham's exasperation fell to laughter. "It is preposterous," he cried. "Preposterous. The dream must end. It gets wilder and wilder. Here am I—in this damned twilight—I never knew a dream in twilight before—an anachronism by two hundred years and trying to persuade an old fool that I am myself, and meanwhile—Uhg!"

He moved in gusty irritation and went striding. In a moment the old man was pursuing him. "Eh! but don't go!" cried the old man. "I'm an old fool, I know. Don't go. Don't leave me in all this darkness."

Graham hesitated, stopped. Suddenly the folly of telling his secret flashed into his mind.

"I didn't mean to offend you—disbelieving you," said the old man coming near. "It's no manner of harm. Call yourself the Sleeper if it pleases you. 'Tis a foolish trick—"

Graham hesitated, turned abruptly and went on his way.

For a time he heard the old man's hobbling pursuit and his wheezy cries receding. But at last the darkness swallowed him and Graham saw him no more.

CHAPTER XII

Ostrog

GRAHAM could now take a clearer view of his position. For a long time yet he wandered, but after the talk of the old man his discovery of this Ostrog was clear in his mind as the final inevitable decision. One thing was evident, those who were at the headquarters of the revolt had succeeded very admirably in suppressing the fact of his disappearance. But every moment he expected to hear the report of his death or of his recapture by the Council.

Presently a man stopped before him. "Have you heard?" he said.

"No!" said Graham starting.

"Near a dozand," said the man, "a dozand men!" and hurried on.

A number of men and a girl passed in the darkness, gesticulating and shouting: "Capitulated! Given up!" "A dozand of men." "Two dozand of men." "Ostrog, Hurrah! Ostrog, Hurrah!" These cries receded, became indistinct.

Other shouting men followed. For a time his attention was absorbed in the fragments of speech he heard. He had a doubt whether all were speaking English. Scraps floated to him, scraps like Pigeon English, like "nigger" dialect, blurred and mangled distortions. He dared accost no one with questions. The impression the people gave him jarred altogether with his preconceptions of the struggle and confirmed the old man's faith in Ostrog. It was only slowly he could bring himself to believe that all these people were rejoicing at the defeat of the Council, that the Council which had pursued him with such power and vigor was after all the weaker of

the two sides in conflict. And if that was so, how did it affect him? Several times he hesitated on the verge of fundamental questions. Once he turned and walked for a long way after a little man of rotund inviting outline, but he was unable to master confidence to address him.

It was only slowly that it came to him that he might ask for the "wind-vane offices," whatever the "wind-vane offices" might be. His first inquiry simply resulted in a direction to go on towards Westminster. His second led to the discovery of a short cut in which he was speedily lost. He was told to leave the ways to which he had hitherto confined himself—no other means of transit—and to plunge down one of the middle staircases into the blackness of a crossway. Thereupon came some trivial adventures; chief of these an ambiguous encounter with a gruff-voiced invisible creature speaking in a strange dialect that seemed at first a strange tongue, a thick flow of speech with the drifting corpses of English words therein, the dialect of the latter-day vile. Then another voice drew near, a girl's voice singing, "tralala tralala." She spoke to Graham, her English touched with something of the same quality. She professed to have lost her sister, she blundered needlessly into him he thought, caught hold of him and laughed. But a word of vague remonstrance sent her into the unseen again.

The sounds about him increased. Stumbling people passed him, speaking excitedly. "They have surrendered!" "The Council! Surely not the Council!" "They are saying so in the Ways." The passage seemed wider. Suddenly the wall fell away. He was in a great space and people were stirring remotely. He inquired his way of an indistinct figure. "Strike straight across," said a woman's voice. He left his guiding wall, and in a moment had stumbled against a little table on which were utensils of glass. Graham's eyes, now attuned to darkness, made out a long vista with pallid tables on either side. He went down this. At one or two of the tables he heard a clang of glass and a sound of eating. There were people then cool enough to dine, or daring enough to steal a meal in spite of social convulsion and darkness. Far off and high up he presently saw a pallid light of a semi-circular shape. As he approached this, a black edge came up and hid it. He stumbled at steps and found himself in a gallery. He heard a sobbing, and found two scared little girls crouched by a railing. These children became silent at the near sound of feet. He tried to console them, but they were very still until he left them. Then as he receded he could hear them sobbing again.

Presently he found himself at the foot of a staircase and near a wide opening. He saw a dim twilight above this and ascended out of the blackness into a street of moving Ways again. Along this a disorderly swarm of people marched shouting. They were singing snatches of the song of the revolt, most of them out of tune. Here and there torches flared creating brief hysterical shadows. He asked his way and was twice puzzled by that same thick dialect. His third attempt won an answer he could understand. He was two miles from the wind-vane offices in Westminster, but the way was easy to follow.

When at last he did approach the district of the wind-vane offices it seemed to him, from the cheering processions that came marching along the Ways, from the tumult of rejoicing, and finally from the restoration of the lighting of the city, that the overthrow of the Council must already be accomplished. And still no news of his absence came to his ears.

The re-illumination of the city came with startling abruptness. Suddenly he stood blinking, all about him men halted dazzled, and the world was incandescent. The light found him already upon the outskirts of the

excited crowds that choked the Ways near the wind-vane offices, and the sense of visibility and exposure that came with it turned his colorless intention of joining Ostrog to a keen anxiety.

For a time he was jostled, obstructed, and endangered by men hoarse and weary with cheering his name, some of them bandaged and bloody in his cause. The frontage of the wind-vane offices was illuminated by some moving picture, but what it was he could not see, because in spite of his strenuous attempts the density of the crowd prevented his approaching it. From the fragments of speech he caught, he judged it conveyed news of the fighting about the Council House. Ignorance and indecision made him slow and ineffective in his movements. For a time he could not conceive how he was to get within the unbroken facade of this place. He made his way slowly into the midst of this mass of people, until he realized that the descending staircase of the central Way led to the interior of the building. This gave him a goal, but the crowding in the central path was so dense that it was long before he could reach it. And even then he encountered intricate obstruction, and had an hour of vivid argument first in this guard room and then in that before he could get a note taken to the one man of all men who was most eager to see him. His story was laughed to scorn at one place, and wiser for that, when at last he reached a second stairway he professed simply to have news of extraordinary importance for Ostrog. What it was he would not say. They sent his note reluctantly. For a long time he waited in a little room at the foot of the lift shaft, and thither at last came Lincoln, eager, apologetic, astonished. He stopped in the doorway scrutinizing Graham, then rushed forward effusively.

"Yes," he cried. "It is you. And you are not dead!"

Graham made a brief explanation.

"MY brother is waiting," explained Lincoln. "He is alone in the wind-vane offices. We feared you had been killed in the theatre. He doubted—and things are very urgent still in spite of what we are telling them there—or he would have come to you."

They ascended a lift, passed along a narrow passage, crossed a great hall, empty save for two hurrying messengers, and entered a comparatively little room, whose only furniture was a long settee and a large oval disc of cloudy, shifting grey, hung by cables from the wall. There Lincoln left Graham for a space, and he remained alone without understanding the shifting smoky shapes that drove slowly across this disc.

His attention was arrested by a sound that began abruptly. It was cheering, the frantic cheering of a vast but very remote crowd, a roaring exultation. This ended as sharply as it had begun, like a sound heard between the opening and shutting of a door. In the outer room was a noise of hurrying steps and a melodious clinking as if a loose chain was running over the teeth of a wheel.

Then he heard the voice of a woman, the rustle of unseen garments. "It is Ostrog!" he heard her say. A little bell rang fitfully, and then everything was still again.

Presently came voices, footsteps and movement without. The footsteps of some one person detached itself from the other sounds and drew near, firm, evenly measured steps. The curtain lifted slowly. A tall, white-haired man, clad in garments of cream-colored silk, appeared, regarding Graham from under his raised arm.

For a moment the white form remained holding the curtain, then dropped it and stood before it. Graham's first impression was of a very broad forehead, very pale blue eyes deep sunken under white brows, an aquiline nose, and a heavily-lined resolute mouth. The

folds of flesh over the eyes, the drooping of the corners of the mouth contradicted the upright bearing, and said the man was old. Graham rose to his feet instinctively, and for a moment the two men stood in silence, regarding each other.

"You are Ostrog?" said Graham.

"I am Ostrog."

"The Boss?"

"So I am called."

Graham felt the inconvenience of the silence. "I have to thank you chiefly, I understand, for my safety," he said presently.

"We were afraid you were killed," said Ostrog. "Or sent to sleep again—for ever. We have been doing everything to keep our secret—the secret of your disappearance. Where have you been? How did you get here?"

Graham told him briefly.

Ostrog listened in silence.

He smiled faintly. "Do you know what I was doing when they came to tell me you had come?"

"How can I guess?"

"Preparing your double."

"My double?"

"A man as like you as we could find. We were going to hypnotize him, to save him the difficulty of acting. It was imperative. The whole of this revolt depends on the idea that you are awake, alive, and with us. Even now a great multitude of people has gathered in the theatre clamoring to see you. They do not trust . . . You know, of course—something of your position?"

"Very little," said Graham.

"It is like this." Ostrog walked a pace or two into the room and turned. "You are absolute owner," he said, "of more than half the world. As a result of that you are practically King. Your powers are limited in many intricate ways, but you are the figure-head, the popular symbol of government. This White Council, the Council of Trustees as it is called—"

"I have heard the vague outline of these things."

"I wondered."

"I came upon a garrulous old man."

"I see . . . Our masses—the word comes from your days—you know of course, that we still have masses—regard you as our actual ruler. Just as a great number of people in your days regarded the Crown as the ruler. They are discontented—the masses all over the earth—with the rule of your Trustees. For the most part it is the old discontent, the old quarrel of the common man with his commonness—the misery of work and discipline and unfitness. But your Trustees have ruled ill. In certain matters, in the administration of the Labor Companies, for example, they have been unwise. They have given endless opportunities. Already we of the popular party were agitating for reforms—when your waking came. Come! If it had been contrived it could not have come more opportunely." He smiled. "The public mind, making no allowance for your years of quiescence, had already hit on the thought of waking you and appealing to you, and—Flash!"

He indicated the outbreak by a gesture, and Graham moved his head to show that he understood.

"The Council muddled—quarrelled. They always do. They could not decide what to do with you. You know how they imprisoned you?"

"I see. I see. And now—we win?"

"We win. Indeed we win. Tonight, in five swift hours. Suddenly we struck everywhere. The wind-vane people, the Labor Company and its millions, burst the bonds. We got the pull of the aeropiles."

He paused. "Yes," said Graham, guessing that aeropile meant flying machine.

"That was, of course, essential. Or they could have got away. All the city rose, every third man almost was in it! All the blue, all the public services, save only

just a few aeronauts and about half the red police. You were rescued, and their own police of the Ways—not half of them could be massed at the Council House—have been broken up, disarmed or killed. All London is ours—now. Only the Council House remains.

"Half of those who remain to them of the red police were lost in that foolish attempt to recapture you. They lost their heads when they lost you. They flung all they had at the theatre. We cut them off from the Council House there. Truly tonight has been a night of victory. Everywhere your star has blazed. A day ago—the White Council ruled as it has ruled for a gross of years, for a century and a half of years, and then, with only a little whispering, a covert arming here and there, suddenly—So!"

"I am very ignorant," said Graham. "I suppose—. I do not clearly understand the conditions of this fighting. If you could explain. Where is the Council? Where is the fight?"

Ostrog stepped across the room, something clicked, and suddenly, save for an oval glow, they were in darkness. For a moment Graham was puzzled.

Then he saw that the cloudy grey disc had taken depth and color, had assumed the appearance of an oval window looking out upon a strange unfamiliar scene.

At the first glance he was unable to guess what this scene might be. It was a daylight scene, the daylight of a wintry day, grey and clear. Across the picture and halfway as it seemed between him and remoter view, a stout cable of twisted white wire stretched vertically. Then he perceived that the rows of great wind-wheels he saw, the wide intervals, the occasional gulfs of darkness, were akin to those through which he had fled from the Council House. He distinguished an orderly file of red figures marching across an open space between files of men in black and realized before Ostrog spoke that he was looking down on the upper surface of latter-day London. The overnight snows had gone. He judged that this mirror was some modern replacement of the camera obscura, but that matter was not explained to him. He saw that though the file of red figures was trotting from left to right, yet they were passing out of the picture to the left. He wondered momentarily, and then saw that the picture was passing slowly, panorama fashion, across the oval.

"In a moment you will see the fighting," said Ostrog at his elbow. "Those fellows in red you notice are prisoners. This is the roof space of London—all the houses are practically continuous now. The streets and public squares are covered in. The gaps and chasms of your time have disappeared."

SOMETHING out of focus obliterated half the picture. Its form suggested a man. There was a gleam of metal, a flash, something that swept across the oval, as the eyelid of a bird sweeps across its eye, and the picture was clear again. And now Graham beheld men running down among the wind-wheels, pointing weapons from which jetted out little smoky flashes. They swarmed thicker and thicker to the right, gesticulating—it might be they were shouting, but of that the picture told nothing. They and the wind-wheels passed slowly and steadily across the field of the mirror.

"Now," said Ostrog, "comes the Council House," and slowly a black edge crept into view and gathered Graham's attention. Soon it was no longer an edge but a cavity, a huge blackened space amidst the clustering edifices, and from it thin spires of smoke rose into the pallid winter sky. Gaunt ruinous masses of the building, mighty truncated piers and girders, rose dismally out of this cavernous darkness. And over these vestiges of some splendid place, countless minute men were clambering, leaping, swarming.

"This is the Council House," said Ostrog. "Their

last stronghold. And the fools wasted enough ammunition to hold out for a month in blowing up the buildings all about them—to stop our attack. You heard the smash? It shattered half the brittle glass in the city.”

And while he spoke, Graham saw that beyond this area of ruins, overhanging it and rising to a great height, was a ragged mass of white building. This mass had been isolated by the ruthless destruction of its surroundings. Black gaps marked the passages the disaster had torn apart; big halls had been slashed open and the decoration of their interiors showed dismally in the wintry dawn, and down the jagged walls hung festoons of divided cables and twisted ends of lines and metallic rods. And amidst all the vast details moved little red specks, the red-clothed defenders of the Council. Every now and then faint flashes illuminated the bleak shadows. At the first sight it seemed to Graham that an attack upon this isolated white building was in progress, but then he perceived that the party of the revolt was not advancing, but sheltered amidst the colossal wreckage that encircled this last ragged stronghold of the red-garbed men, was keeping up a fitful firing.

And not ten hours ago he had stood beneath the ventilating fans in a little chamber within that remote building wondering what was happening in the world!

Looking more attentively at this warlike episode moved silently across the centre of the mirror, Graham saw that the white building was surrounded on every side by ruins, and Ostrog proceeded to describe in concise phrases how its defenders had sought by such destruction to isolate themselves from a storm. He spoke of the loss of men that huge downfall had entailed in an indifferent tone. He indicated an improvised mortuary among the wreckage, showed ambulances swarming like cheese-mites along a ruinous groove that had once been a street of moving ways. He was more interested in pointing out the parts of the Council House, the distribution of the besiegers. In a little while the civil contest that had convulsed London was no longer a mystery to Graham. It was no tumultuous revolt had occurred that night, no equal warfare, but a splendidly organized *coup d'état*. Ostrog's grasp of details was astonishing; he seemed to know the business of even the smallest knot of black and red specks that crawled amidst these places.

He stretched a huge black arm across the luminous picture, and showed the room whence Graham had escaped, and across the chasm of ruins the course of his flight. Graham recognized the gulf across which the gutter ran, and the wind-wheels where he had crouched from the flying machine. The rest of his path had succumbed to the explosion. He looked again at the Council House, and it was already half hidden, and on the right a hillside with a cluster of domes and pinacles, hazy, dim and distant, was gliding into view.

“And the Council is really overthrown?” he said.

“Overthrown,” said Ostrog.

“And I—. Is it indeed true that I—?”

“You are Master of the World.”

“But that white flag—”

“That is the flag of the Council—the flag of the Rule of the World. It will fall. The fight is over. Their attack on the theatre was their last frantic struggle. They have only a thousand men or so, and some of these men will be disloyal. They have little ammunition. And we are reviving the ancient arts. We are casting guns.”

“But—help. Is this city the world?”

“Practically this is all they have left to them of their empire. Abroad the cities have either revolted with us or wait the issue. Your awakening has perplexed them, paralyzed them.”

“But haven't the Council flying machines? Why is there no fighting with them?”

“They had. But the greater part of the *aéronauts* were in the revolt with us. They wouldn't take the risk of fighting on our side, but they would not stir against us. We *had* to get a pull with the *aéronauts*. Quite half were with us, and the others knew it. Directly they knew you had got away, those looking for you dropped. We killed the man who shot at you—an hour ago. And we occupied the flying stages at the outset in every city we could, and so stopped and captured the *aéroplanes*, and as for the little flying machines that turned out—for some did—we kept up too straight and steady a fire for them to get near the Council House. If they dropped they couldn't rise again, because there's no clear space about there for them to get up. Several we have smashed, several others have dropped and surrendered, the rest have gone off to the Continent to find a friendly city if they can before their fuel runs out. Most of these men were only too glad to be taken, prisoner and kept out of harm's way. Upsetting in a flying machine isn't a very attractive prospect. There's no chance for the Council that way. Its days are done.”

He laughed and turned to the oval reflection again to show Graham what he meant by flying stages. Even the four nearer ones were remote and obscured by a thin morning haze. But Graham could perceive they were very vast structures, judged even by the standard of the things about them.

And then as these dim shapes passed to the left there came again the sight of the expanse across which the disarmed men in red had been marching. And then the black ruins, and then again the beleaguered white fastness of the Council. It appeared no longer a ghostly pile, but glowing amber in the sunlight, for a cloud shadow had passed. About it the pigmy struggle still hung in suspense, but now the red defenders were no longer firing.

SO, in a dusky stillness, the man from the nineteenth century saw the closing scene of the great revolt, the forcible establishment of his rule. With a quality of startling discovery it came to him that this was his world, and not that other he had left behind; that this was no spectacle to culminate and cease; that in this world lay whatever life was still before him, lay all his duties and dangers and responsibilities. He turned with fresh questions. Ostrog began to answer them, and then broke off abruptly. “But these things I must explain more fully later. At present there are—duties. The people are coming by the moving ways towards this ward from every part of the city—the markets and theatres are densely crowded. You are just in time for them. They are clamoring to see you. And abroad they want to see you. Paris, New York, Chicago, Denver, Capri—thousands of cities are up and in a tumult, undecided, and clamoring to see you. They have clamored that you should be awakened for years, and now it is done they will scarcely believe—”

“But surely—I can't go . . .”

Ostrog answered from the other side of the room, and the picture on the oval disc paled and vanished as the light jerked back again. “There are kinetotelephotographs,” he said. “As you bow to the people here—all over the world myriads of myriads of people, packed and still in darkened halls, will see you also. In black and white, of course—not like this. And you will hear their shouts reinforcing the shouting in the hall.

“And there is an optical contrivance we shall use,” said Ostrog, “used by some of the posturers and women dancers. It may be novel to you. You stand in a very bright light, and they see not you but a magnified image of you thrown on a screen—so that even the furthest man in the remotest gallery can, if he chooses, count your eyelashes.”

Graham clutched desperately at one of the questions in his mind. "What is the population of London?" he said.

"Eight and twaindy myriads."

"Eight and what?"

"More than thirty-three millions."

These figures went beyond Graham's imagination.

"You will be expected to say something," said Ostrog. "Not what you used to call a Speech, but what our people call a Word—just one sentence, six or seven words. Something formal. If I might suggest—I have awakened and my heart is with you." That is the sort of thing they want."

"What was that?" asked Graham.

"I am awakened and my heart is with you." And bow—bow royally. But first we must get you black robes—for black is your color. Do you mind? And then they will disperse to their homes."

Graham hesitated. "I am in your hands," he said.

Ostrog was clearly of that opinion. He thought for a moment, turned to the curtain and called brief directions to some unseen attendants. Almost immediately a black robe, the very fellow of the black robe Graham had worn in the theatre, was brought. And as he threw it about his shoulders there came from the room without the shrilling of a high-pitched bell. Ostrog turned in interrogation to the attendant, then suddenly seemed to change his mind, pulled the curtain aside and disappeared.

For a moment Graham stood with the deferential attendant listening to Ostrog's retreating steps. There was a sound of quick question and answer and of men running. The curtain was snatched back and Ostrog reappeared, his massive face glowing with excitement. He crossed the room in a stride, clicked the room into darkness, gripped Graham's arm and pointed to the mirror.

"Even as we turned away," he said.

Graham saw his index finger, black and colossal, above the mirrored Council House. For a moment he did not understand. And then he perceived that the flagstaff that had carried the white banner was bare.

"Do you mean—?" he began.

"The Council has surrendered. Its rule is at an end for everyone."

"Look!" and Ostrog pointed to a coil of black that crept in little jerks up the vacant flagstaff, unfolding as it rose.

The oval picture paled as Lincoln pulled the curtain aside and entered.

"They are clamorous," he said.

Ostrog kept his grip of Graham's arm.

"We have raised the people," he said. "We have given them arms. For today at least their wishes must be law."

Lincoln held the Curtain open for Graham and Ostrog to pass through. . . .

On his way to the markets Graham had a transitory glance of a long, narrow white-walled room in which men in the universal blue canvas were carrying covered things like biers, and about which men in medical purple hurried to and fro. From this room came groans and wailing. He had an impression of an empty blood-stained couch, of men on other couches, bandaged and blood-stained. It was just a glimpse from a railed footway and then a buttress hid the place and they were going on towards the markets. . . .

The roar of the multitude was near now: it leapt to thunder. And, arresting his attention, a fluttering of black banners, the waving of blue canvas and brown rags, and the swarming vastness of the theatre near the public markets came into view down a long passage. The picture opened out. He perceived they were enter-

ing the great theatre of his first appearance, the great theatre he had last seen as a chequer-work of glare and blackness in his flight from the red police. This time he entered it along a gallery at a level high above the stage. The place was now brilliantly lit again. He sought the gangway up which he had fled, but he could not tell it from among its dozens of fellows; nor could he see anything of the smashed seats, deflated cushions, and such like traces of the fight because of the density of the people. Except the stage the whole place was closely packed. Looking down the effect was a vast area of stippled pink, each dot a still upturned face regarding him. At his appearance with Ostrog the cheering died away, the singing died away, a common interest stilled and unified the disorder. It seemed as though every individual of those myriads was watching him.

CHAPTER XIII

The End of the Old Order

SO far as Graham was able to judge, it was near mid-day when the white banner of the Council fell. But some hours had to elapse before it was possible to effect the formal capitulation, and so after he had spoken his "Word" he retired to his new apartments in the wind-vane offices. The continuous excitement of the last twelve hours had left him inordinately fatigued, even his curiosity was exhausted; for a space he sat inert and passive with open eyes, and for a space he slept. He was roused by two medical attendants, come prepared with stimulants to sustain him through the next occasion. After he had taken their drugs and bathed by their advice in cold water, he felt a rapid return of interest and energy, and was presently able and willing to accompany Ostrog through several miles (as it seemed) of passages, lifts, and slides to the closing scene of the White Council's rule.

The way ran deviously through a maze of buildings. They came at last to a passage that curved about, and showed broadening before him an oblong opening, clouds hot with sunset, and the ragged skyline of the ruinous Council House. A tumult of shouts came drifting up to him. In another moment they had come out high up on the brow of the cliff of torn buildings that overhung the wreckage. The vast area opened to Graham's eyes, none the less strange and wonderful for the remote view he had had of it in the oval mirror.

This rudely amphitheatral space seemed now the better part of a mile to its outer edge. It was gold lit on the left hand, catching the sunlight, and below and to the right clear and cold in the shadow. Above the shadowy grey Council House that stood in the midst of it, the great black banner of the surrender still hung in sluggish folds against the blazing sunset. Severed rooms, halls and passages gaped strangely, broken masses of metal projected dismally from the complex wreckage, vast masses of twisted cable dropped like tangled seaweed, and from its base came a tumult of innumerable voices, violent concussions, and the sound of trumpets. All about this great white pile was a ring of desolation; the smashed and blackened masses, the gaunt foundations and ruinous lumber of the fabric that had been destroyed by the Council's orders, skeletons of girders, Titanic masses of wall, forests of stout pillars. Amongst the sombre wreckage beneath, running water flashed and glistened, and far away across the space, out of the midst of a vague vast mass of buildings, there thrust the twisted end of a water-main, two hundred feet in the air, thunderously spouting a shining cascade. And everywhere great multitudes of people.

Wherever there was space and foothold, people swarmed, little people, small and minutely clear, except where the sunset touched them to indistinguishable gold.



Vast masses of twisted cable dropped like tangled sea-weed.

They clambered up the tottering walls, they clung in wreaths and groups about the high-standing pillars. They swarmed along the edges of the circle of ruins. The air was full of their shouting, and they were pressing and swaying towards the central space.

The upper stories of the Council House seemed deserted, not a human being was visible. Only the drooping banner of the surrender hung heavily against the light. The dead were within the Council House, or hidden by the swarming people, or carried away. Graham could see only a few neglected bodies in gaps and corners of the ruins, and amidst the flowing water.

"Will you let them see you, Sire?" said Ostrog. "They are very anxious to see you."

Graham hesitated, and then walked forward to where the broken verge of wall dropped sheer. He stood looking down, a lonely, tall, black figure against the sky.

Very slowly the swarming ruins became aware of him. And as they did so little bands of black-uniformed men appeared remotely, thrusting through the crowds to-

wards the Council House. He saw little black heads become pink, looking at him, saw by that means a wave of recognition sweep across the space. It occurred to him that he should accord them some recognition. He held up his arm, then pointed to the Council House and dropped his hand. The voices below became unanimous, gathered volume, came up to him as multitudinous wavelets of cheering.

The western sky was a pallid bluish green, and Jupiter shone high in the south, before the capitulation was accomplished. Above was a slow insensible change, the advance of night serene and beautiful; below was hurry, excitement, conflicting orders, pauses, spasmodic developments of organization, a vast ascending clamor and confusion. Before the Council came out, toiling perspiring men, directed by a conflict of shouts, carried forth hundreds of those who had perished in the hand-to-hand conflict within those long passages and chambers. . . .

Guards in black lined the way that the Council would

come, and as far as the eye could reach into the hazy blue twilight of the ruins, and swarming now at every possible point in the captured Council House and along the shattered cliff of its circumadjacent buildings, were innumerable people, and their voices even when they were not cheering, were as the souging of the sea upon a pebble beach. Ostrog had chosen a huge commanding pile of crushed and overthrown masonry, and on this a stage of timbers and metal girders was being hastily constructed. Its essential parts were complete, but humming and clangorous machinery still glared fitfully in the shadows beneath this temporary edifice.

The stage had a small higher portion on which Graham stood with Ostrog and Lincoln close beside him, a little in advance of a group of minor officers. A broader lower stage surrounded this quarter deck, and on this were the black-uniformed guards of the revolt armed with the little green weapons whose very names Graham still did not know. Those standing about him perceived that his eyes wandered perpetually from the swarming people in the twilight ruins about him to the darkling mass of the White Council House, whence the Trustees would presently come, and to the gaunt cliffs of ruin that encircled him, and so back to the people. The voices of the crowd swelled to a deafening tumult.

He saw the Councillors first afar off in the glare of one of the temporary lights that marked their path, a little group of white figures blinking in a black archway. In the Council House they had been in darkness. He watched them approaching, drawing nearer past first this blazing electric star and then that; the minatory roar of the crowd over whom their power had lasted for a hundred and fifty years marched along beside them. As they drew still nearer their faces came out weary, white and anxious. He saw them blinking up through the glare about him and Ostrog. He contrasted their strange cold looks in the Hall of Atlas. . . . Presently he could recognize several of them; the man who had rapped the table at Howard, a burly man with a red beard, and one delicate-featured, short, dark man with a peculiarly long skull. He noted that two were whispering together and looking behind him at Ostrog. Next there came a tall, dark and handsome man, walking down-cast. Abruptly he glanced up, his eyes touched Graham for a moment, and passed beyond him to Ostrog. The way that had been made for them was so contrived that they had to march past and curve about before they came to the sloping path of planks that ascended to the stage where their surrender was to be made.

"The Master, the Master! God and the Master," shouted the people. "To hell with the Council!" Graham looked at their multitudes, receding beyond counting into a shouting haze, and then at Ostrog beside him, white and steadfast and still. His eye went again to the little group of White Councillors. And then he looked up at the familiar quiet stars overhead. The marvelous element in his fate was suddenly vivid. Could that be his indeed, that little life in his memory two hundred years gone by—and this as well?

CHAPTER XIV

From the Crow's Nest

AND so after strange delays and through an avenue of doubt and battle, this man from the nineteenth century came at last to his position at the head of that complex world.

At first when he rose from the long deep sleep that followed his rescue and the surrender of the Council, he did not recognize his surroundings. By an effort he gained a clue in his mind, and all that had happened came back to him, at first with a quality of insincerity

like a story heard, like something read out of a book. And even before his memories were clear, the exultation of his escape, the wonder of his prominence were back in his mind. He was owner of half the world; Master of the Earth. This new great age was in the completest sense his. He no longer hoped to discover his experiences a dream; he became anxious now to convince himself that they were real.

An obsequious vail assisted him to dress under the direction of a dignified chief attendant, a little man whose face proclaimed him Japanese, albeit he spoke English like an Englishman. From the latter he learnt something of the state of affairs. Already the revolution was an accepted fact; already business was being resumed throughout the city. Abroad the downfall of the Council had been received for the most part with delight. Nowhere was the Council popular, and the thousand cities of Western America, after two hundred years still jealous of New York, London, and the East, had risen almost unanimously two days before at the news of Graham's imprisonment. Paris was fighting within itself. The rest of the world hung in suspense.

While he was breaking his fast, the sound of a telephone bell jetted from a corner, and his chief attendant called his attention to the voice of Ostrog making polite inquiries. Graham interrupted his refreshment to reply. Very shortly Lincoln arrived, and Graham at once expressed a strong desire to talk to people and to be shown more of the new life that was opening before him. Lincoln informed him that in three hours' time a representative gathering of officials and their wives would be held in the state apartments of the wind-vane Chief. Graham's desire to traverse the ways of the city was, however, at present impossible, because of the enormous excitement of the people. It was, however, quite possible for him to take a bird's-eye view of the city from the crow's nest of the wind-vane keeper. To this accordingly Graham was conducted by his attendant. Lincoln, with a graceful compliment to the attendant, apologized for not accompanying them, on account of the present pressure of administrative work.

Higher even than the most gigantic wind-wheels hung this crow's nest, a clear thousand feet above the roofs, a little disc-shaped speck on a spear of metallic filigree, cable stayed. To its summit Graham was drawn in a little wire-hung cradle. Halfway down the frail-seeming stem was a light gallery about which hung a cluster of tubes—minute they looked from above—rotating slowly on the ring of its outer rail. These were the specula, *en rapport* with the wind-vane keeper's mirrors, in one of which Ostrog had shown him the coming of his rule. His Japanese attendant ascended before him and they spent nearly an hour asking and answering questions.

It was a day full of the promise and quality of spring. The touch of the wind warmed. The sky was an intense blue and the vast expanse of London shone dazzling under the morning sun. The air was clear of smoke and haze, sweet as the air of a mountain glen.

Save for the irregular oval of ruins about the House of the Council and the black flag of the surrender that fluttered there, the mighty city seen from above showed few signs of the swift revolution that had, to his imagination, in one night and one day, changed the destinies of the world. A multitude of people still swarmed over these ruins, and the huge openwork stagings in the distance from which started in times of peace the service of aeroplanes to the various great cities of Europe and America, were also black with the victors. Across a narrow way of planking raised on trestles that crossed the ruins a crowd of workmen were busy restoring the connection between the cables and wires of the Council House and the rest of the city, preparatory to the trans-

fer thither of Ostrog's headquarters from the Wind-Vane buildings.

For the rest the luminous expanse was undisturbed. So vast was its serenity in comparison with the areas of disturbance, that presently Graham, looking beyond them, could almost forget the thousands of men lying out of sight in the artificial glare within the quasi-subterranean labyrinth, dead or dying of the overnight wounds, forget the improvised wards with the hosts of surgeons, nurses, and bearers feverishly busy, forget, indeed, all the wonder, consternation and novelty under the electric lights. Down there in the hidden ways of the anthill he knew that the revolution triumphed, that black everywhere carried the day, black favors, black banners, black festoons across the streets. And out here, under the fresh sunlight, beyond the crater of the fight, as if nothing had happened to the earth, the forest of Wind Vanes that had grown from one or two while the Council had ruled, roared peacefully upon their incessant duty.

Far away, spiked, jagged and indented by the wind vanes, the Surrey Hills rose blue and faint; to the north and nearer, the sharp contours of High gate and Muswell Hill were similarly jagged. And all over the countryside, he knew, on every crest and hill, where once the hedges had interlaced, and cottages, churches, inns, and farmhouses had nestled among their trees, wind wheels similar to those he saw and hearing like them vast advertisements, gaunt and distinctive symbols of the new age, cast their whirling shadows and stored incessantly the energy that flowed away incessantly through all the arteries of the city. And underneath these wandered the countless flocks and herds of the British Food Trust with their lonely guards and keepers.

Not a familiar outline anywhere broke the cluster of gigantic shapes below. St. Paul's he knew survived, and many of the old buildings in Westminster, embedded out of sight, arched over and covered in among the giant growths of this great age. The Thames, too, made no fall and gleam of silver to break the wilderness of the city; the thirsty water mains drank up every drop of its waters before they reached the walls. Its bed and estuary, scoured and sunken, was now a canal of sea water and a race of grimy bargemen brought the heavy materials of trade from the Pool thereby beneath the very feet of the workers. Faint and dim in the eastward between earth and sky hung the clustering masts of the colossal shipping in the Pool. For all the heavy traffic, for which there was no need of haste, came in gigantic sailing ships from the ends of the earth, and the heavy goods for which there was urgency in mechanical ships of a smaller swifter sort.

And to the south over the hills, came vast aqueducts with sea water for the sewers and in three separate directions, ran pallid lines—the roads, stippled with moving grey specks. On the first occasion that offered he was determined to go out and see these roads. That would come after the flying ship he was presently to try. His attendant officer described them as a pair of gently curving surfaces a hundred yards wide, each one for the traffic going in one direction, and made of a substance called Eadhamite—an artificial substance, so far as he could gather, resembling toughened glass. Along this shot a strange traffic of narrow rubber-shod vehicles, great single wheels, two and four wheeled vehicles, sweeping along at velocities of from one to six miles a minute. Railroads had vanished; a few embankments remained as rust-crowned trenches here and there. Some few formed the cores of Eadhamite ways.

Among the first things to strike his attention had been the great fleets of advertisement balloons and kites that receded in irregular vistas northward and southward

along the lines of the *aéroplane* journeys. No *aéroplanes* were to be seen. Their passages had ceased, and only one little-seeming aeropile circled high in the blue distance above the Surrey Hills, an unimpressive soaring speck.

THING Graham had already learnt, and which he found very hard to imagine, was that nearly all the towns in the country, and almost all the villages, had disappeared. Here and there only, he understood, some gigantic hotel-like edifice stood amid square miles of some single cultivation and preserved the name of a town—as Bournemouth, Wareham, or Swanage. Yet the officer had speedily convinced him how inevitable such a change had been. The old order had dotted the country with farmhouses, and every two or three miles was the ruling landlord's estate, and the place of the inn and cobbler, the grocer's shop and church—the village. Every eight miles or so was the country town, where lawyer, corn merchant, wool-stapler, saddler, veterinary surgeon, doctor, draper, milliner and so forth lived. Every eight miles—simply because that eight mile marketing journey, four there and back, was as much as was comfortable for the farmer. But directly the railways came into play, and after them the light railways, and all the swift new motor cars that had replaced wagons and horses, and so soon as the high roads began to be made of wood, and rubber, and Eadhamite, and all sorts of elastic durable substances—the necessity of having such frequent market towns disappeared. And the big towns grew. They drew the worker with the gravitational force of seemingly endless work, the employer with their suggestions of an infinite ocean of labor.

And as the standard of comfort rose, as the complexity of the mechanism of living increased, life in the country had become more and more costly, or narrow and impossible. The disappearance of vicar and squire, the extinction of the general practitioner by the city specialist, had robbed the village of its last touch of culture. After telephone, kinematograph and phonograph had replaced newspaper, book, schoolmaster, and letter, to live outside the range of the electric cables was to live an isolated savage. In the country were neither means of being clothed nor fed (according to the refined conceptions of the time), no efficient doctors for an emergency, no company and no pursuits.

Moreover, mechanical appliances in agriculture made one engineer the equivalent of thirty laborers. So, inverting the condition of the city clerk in the days when London was scarce inhabitable because of the coaly foulness of its air, the laborers now came hurrying by road or air to the city and its life and delights at night to leave it again in the morning. The city had swallowed up humanity; man had entered upon a new stage in his development. First had come the nomad, the hunter, then had followed the agriculturist of the agricultural state, whose towns and cities and ports were but the headquarters and markets of the countryside. And now, logical consequence of an epoch of invention, was this huge new aggregation of men. Save London, there were only four other cities in Britain—Edinburgh, Portsmouth, Manchester and Shrewsbury. Such things as these, simple statements of fact though they were to contemporary men, strained Graham's imagination to picture. And when he glanced "over beyond there" at the strange things that existed on the Continent, it failed him altogether.

He had a vision of city beyond city, cities on great plains, cities beside great rivers, vast cities along the sea margin, cities girdled by snowy mountains. Over a great part of the earth the English tongue was spoken; taken together with its Spanish American and Hindoo

and Negro and "Pidgin" dialects, it was the everyday language of two-thirds of the people of the earth. On the Continent, save as remote and curious survivals, three other languages alone held sway—German, which reached to Antioch and Genoa and jostled Spanish-English at Cadiz, a Gallicized Russian which met the Indian English in Persia and Kurdistan and the "Pidgin" English in Peking, and French still clear and brilliant, the language of lucidity, which shared the Mediterranean with the Indian English and German and reached through a negro dialect to the Congo.

And everywhere now, through the city-set earth, save in the administered "black belt" territories of the tropics, the same cosmopolitan social organization prevailed, and everywhere from Pole to Equator his property and his responsibilities extended. The whole world was civilized; the whole world dwelt in cities; the whole world was property. Over the British Empire and throughout America his ownership was scarcely disguised, Congress and Parliament were usually regarded as antique, curious gatherings. And even in the two Empires of Russia and Germany, the influence of his wealth was conceivably of enormous weight. There, of course, came problems—possibilities, but, uplifted as he was, even Russia and Germany seemed sufficiently remote. And of the quality of the black belt administration, and of what that might mean for him he thought, after the fashion of his former days, not at all. That it should hang like a threat over the spacious vision before him could not enter his nineteenth century mind. But his mind turned at once from the scenery to the thought of a vanished dread. "What of the yellow peril?" he asked and Asano made him explain. The Chinese spectre had vanished. Chinaman and European were at peace. The twentieth century had discovered with reluctant certainty that the average Chinaman was as civilized, more moral, and far more intelligent than the average European serf, and had repeated on a gigantic scale the fraternization of Scot and Englishman that happened in the seventeenth century. As Asano put it; "They thought it over. They found we were white men after all." Graham turned again to the view and his thoughts took a new direction.

Out of the rim south-west, glittering and strange, voluptuous, and in some way terrible, shone those Pleasure Cities, of which the kinematograph-phonograph and the old man in the street had spoken. Strange places reminiscent of the legendary Sybaris, cities of art and beauty, mercenary art and mercenary beauty, sterile wonderful cities of motion and music, whither repaired all who profited by the fierce, inglorious, economic struggle that went on in the glaring labyrinth below.

Fierce he knew it was. How fierce he could judge from the fact that these latter-day people referred back to the England of the nineteenth century as the figure of an idyllic easy-going life. He turned his eyes to the scene immediately before him again, trying to conceive the big factories of that intricate maze.

Northward he knew were the potters, makers not only of earthenware and china, but of the kindred pastes and compounds a subtler mineralogical chemistry had devised; there were the makers of statuettes and wall ornaments and much intricate furniture; there too were the factories where feverishly competitive authors devised their phonograph discourses and advertisements and arranged the groupings and developments for their perpetually startling and novel kinematographic dramatic works. Thence, too, flashed the world-wide messages, the world-wide falsehoods of the news-tellers, the chargers of the telephonic machines that had replaced the newspapers of the past.

To the westward beyond the smashed Council House

were the voluminous offices of municipal control and government; and to the eastward, towards the port, the trading quarters, the huge public markets, the theatres, houses of resort, betting palaces, miles of billiard saloons, baseball and football circuses, wild beast rings and the innumerable temples of the Christian and quasi-Christian sects, the Mahomedans, Buddhists, Gnostics, Spook Worshipers, the Incubus Worshipers, the Furniture Worshipers, and so forth; and to the south again a vast manufacture of textiles, pickles, wines and condiments. And from point to point tore the countless multitudes along the roaring mechanical ways. A gigantic hive, of which the winds were tireless servants, and the ceaseless wind-vanes an appropriate crown and symbol.

HE thought of the unprecedented population that had been sucked up by this sponge of halls and galleries—the thirty-three million lives that were playing out each its own brief ineffectual drama below him, and the complacency that the brightness of the day and the space and splendor of the view, and above all the sense of his own importance had begotten, dwindled and perished. Looking down from this height over the city it became at last possible to conceive this overwhelming multitude of thirty-three millions, the reality of the responsibility he would take upon himself, the vastness of the human Maelstrom over which his slender kingship hung.

He tried to figure the individual life. It astonished him to realize how little the common man had changed in spite of the visible change in his conditions. Life and property, indeed, were secure from violence almost all over the world, zymotic diseases, bacterial diseases of all sorts had practically vanished, everyone had a sufficiency of food and clothing, and warmed in the city ways and sheltered from the weather—so much the almost mechanical progress of science and the physical organization of society had accomplished. But the crowd, he was already beginning to discover, was a crowd still, helpless in the hands of demagogue and organizer, individually cowardly, individually swayed by appetite, collectively incalculable. The memory of countless figures in pale blue canvas came before his mind. Millions of such men and women below him, he knew, had never been out of the city, had never seen beyond the little round of unintelligent grudging participation in the world's business, and unintelligent dissatisfied sharing in its tawdrier pleasures. He thought of the hopes of his vanished contemporaries, and for a moment the dream of London in Morris's quaint old *News from Nowhere*, and the perfect land of Hudson's beautiful *Crystal Age* appeared before him in an atmosphere of infinite loss. He thought of his own hopes.

For in the latter days of that passionate life that lay now so far behind him, the conception of a free and equal manhood had become a very real thing to him. He had hoped, as indeed his age had hoped, rashly taking it for granted, that the sacrifice of the many to the few would some day cease, that a day was near when every child born of woman should have a fair and assured chance of happiness. And here, after two hundred years, the same hope, still unfulfilled, cried passionately through the city. After two hundred years, he knew, greater than ever, grown with the city to gigantic proportions, were poverty and helpless labor and all the sorrows of his time.

Already he knew something of the history of the intervening years. He had heard now of the moral decay that had followed the collapse of supernatural religion in the minds of ignoble man, the decline of public honor, the ascendancy of wealth. For men who had lost their

belief in God had still kept their faith in property, and wealth ruled a venial world.

His Japanese attendant, Asano, in expounding the political history of the intervening two centuries, drew an apt image from a seed eaten by insect parasites. First there is the original seed, ripening vigorously enough. And then comes some insect and lays an egg under the skin, and behold! in a little while the seed is a hollow shape with an active grub inside that has eaten out its substance. And then comes some secondary parasite, some ichneumon fly, and lays an egg within this grub, and behold! that, too, is a hollow shape, and the new living thing is inside its predecessor's skin which itself is snug within the seed coat. And the seed coat still keeps its shape, most people think it a seed still, and for all one knows it may still think itself a seed, vigorous and alive. "Your Victorian kingdom," said Asano, "was like that—kingship with the heart eaten out." The landowners—the barons and gentry—began ages ago with King John; there were lapses, but they beheaded King Charles, and ended practically with King George, a mere husk of a king . . . the real power in the hands of their parliament. But the Parliament—the organ of the land-holding tenant-ruling gentry—did not keep its power long. The change had already come in the nineteenth century. The franchises had been broadened until it included masses of ignorant men, "urban myriads," who went in their featureless thousands to vote together. And the natural consequence of a swarming constituency is the rule of the party organization. Power was passing even in the Victorian time to the party machinery, secret, complex, and corrupt. Very speedily power was in the hands of great men of business who financed the machines. A time came when the real power and interest of the Empire rested visibly between the two party councils, ruling by newspapers and electoral organizations—two small groups of rich and able men, working at first in opposition, then presently together.

There was a reaction of a genteel ineffectual sort. There were numberless books in existence, Asano said, to prove that—the publication of some of them was as early as Graham's sleep—a whole literature of reaction in fact. The party of the reaction seems to have locked itself into its study and rebelled with unflinching determination—on paper. The urgent necessity of either capturing or depriving the party councils of power is a common suggestion underlying all the thoughtful work of the early twentieth century, both in America and England. In most of these things America was a little earlier than England, though both countries drove the same way.

That counter-revolution never came. It could never organize and keep pure. There was not enough of the old sentimentality, the old faith in righteousness, left among men. Any organization that became big enough to influence the polls became complex enough to be undermined, broken up, or bought outright by capable rich men. Socialistic and Popular, Reactionary and Purity Parties were all at last mere Stock Exchange counters, selling their principles to pay for their electioneering. And the great concern of the rich was naturally to keep property intact, the board clear for the game of trade. Just as the feudal concern had been to keep the board clear for hunting and war. The whole world was exploited, a battlefield of businesses; and financial convulsions, the scourge of currency manipulation, tariff wars, made more human misery during the twentieth century—because the wretchedness was dreary life instead of speedy death—than had war, pestilence and famine, in the darkest hours of earlier history.

His own part in the development of this time he now knew clearly enough. Through the successive phases in the development of this mechanical civilization, aiding

and presently directing its development, there had grown a new power, the Council, the board of his trustees. At first it had been a mere chance union of the millions of Isbister and Warming, a mere property holding company, the creation of two childless testators' whims, but the collective talent of its first constitution had speedily guided it to a vast influence, until by title deed, loan and share, under a hundred disguises and pseudonyms it had ramified through the fabric of the American and English States.

Wielding an enormous influence and patronage, the Council had early assumed a political aspect; and in its development it had continually used its wealth to tip the beam of political decisions and its political advantages to grasp yet more and more wealth. At last the party organizations of two hemispheres were in its hands; it became an inner council of political control. Its last struggle was with the tacit alliance of the great Jewish families. But these families were linked only by a feeble sentiment, at any time inheritance might fling a huge fragment of their resources to a minor, a woman or a fool, marriages and legacies alienated hundreds of thousands at one blow. The Council had no such breach in its continuity. Steadily, steadfastly it grew.

THE original Council was not simply twelve men of exceptional ability; they fused, it was a council of genius. It struck boldly for riches, for political influence, and the two subserved each other. With amazing foresight it spent great sums of money on the art of flying, holding that invention back against an hour foreseen. It used the patent laws, and a thousand half-legal expedients, to hamper all investigators who refused to work with it. In the old days it never missed a capable man. It paid his price. Its policy in those days was vigorous—unerring, and against it as it grew steadily and incessantly was only the chaotic selfish rule of the casually rich. In a hundred years Graham had become almost exclusive owner of Africa, of South America, of France, of London, of England and all its influence—for all practical purposes, that is—a power in North America—then the dominant power in America. The Council bought an organized China, drilled Asia, crippled the Old World empires, undermined them financially, fought and defeated them.

And this spreading usurpation of the world was so dexterously performed—a proteus—hundreds of banks, companies, syndicates, masked the Council's operations—that it was already far advanced before common men suspected the tyranny that had come. The Council never hesitated, never faltered. Means of communication, land, buildings, governments, municipalities, the territorial companies of the tropics, every human enterprise, it gathered greedily. And it drilled and marshalled its men, its railway police, its roadway police, its house guards, and drain and cable guards, its hosts of land-workers. Their unions it did not fight, but it undermined and betrayed and bought them. It bought the world at last. And, finally, its culminating stroke was the introduction of flying.

When the Council, in conflict with the workers in some of its huge monopolies, did something flagrantly illegal and that without even the ordinary civility of bribery, the old Law, alarmed for the profits of its complaisance, looked about it for weapons. But there were no more armies, no fighting navies; the age of Peace had come. The only possible war ships were the great steam vessels of the Council's Navigation Trust. The police forces they controlled; the police of the railways, of the ships, of their agricultural estates, their time-keepers and order-keepers, outnumbered the neglected little forces of the old country and municipal organizations ten to one. And they produced flying machines.

There were men alive still who could remember the last great debate in the London House of Commons—the legal party, the party against the Council was in a minority, but it made a desperate fight—and how the members came crowding out upon the terrace to see these great unfamiliar winged shapes circling quietly overhead. The Council had soared to its power. The last sham of democracy that had permitted unlimited irresponsible property was at an end.

Within one hundred and fifty years of Graham's falling asleep, his Council had thrown off its disguises and ruled openly, supreme in his name. Elections had become a cheerful formality, a septennial folly, an ancient unmeaning custom; a social Parliament as ineffectual as the convocation of the Established Church in Victorian times assembled now and then; and a legitimate King of England, disinherited, drunken and witless, played foolishly in a second-rate music-hall. So the magnificent dream of the nineteenth century, the noble project of universal individual liberty and universal happiness, touched by a disease of honor, crippled by a superstition of absolute property, crippled by the religious feuds that had robbed the common citizens of education, robbed men of standards of conduct, and brought the sanctions of morality to utter contempt, had worked itself out in the face of invention and ignoble enterprise, first to a warring plutocracy, and finally to the rule of a supreme plutocrat. His Council at last had ceased even to trouble to have its decrees endorsed by the constitutional authorities, and he a motionless, sunken, yellow-skinned figure had lain, neither dead nor living, recognizably and immediately Master of the Earth. And awoke at last to find himself—Master of that inheritance! Awoke to stand under the cloudless empty sky and gaze down upon the greatness of his dominion.

To what end had he awakened? Was this city, this hive of hopeless toilers, the final refutation of his ancient hopes? Or was the fire of liberty, the fire that had blazed and waned in the years of his past life, still smouldering below there? He thought of the stir and impulse of the song of the revolution. Was that song merely the trick of a demagogue, to be forgotten when its purpose was served? Was the hope that still stirred within him only the memory of abandoned things, the vestige of a creed outworn? Or had it a wider meaning, an import interwoven with the destiny of man? To what end had he awakened, what was there for him to do? Humanity was spread below him like a map. He thought of the millions and millions of humanity following each other unceasingly for ever out of the darkness of non-existence into the darkness of death. To what end? Aid there must be, but it transcended his power of thought. He saw for the first time clearly his own infinite littleness, saw stark and terrible the tragic contrast of human strength and the craving of the human heart. For that little while he knew himself for the petty accident he was, and knew therewith the greatness of his desire. And suddenly his littleness was intolerable, his aspiration was intolerable, and there came to him an irresistible impulse to pray. And he prayed. He prayed vague, incoherent, contradictory things, his soul strained up through time and space and all the fleeting multitudinous confusion of being, towards something—he scarcely knew what—towards something that could comprehend his striving and endure.

A man and a woman were far below on a roof space to the southward enjoying the freshness of the morning air. The man had brought out a perspective glass to spy upon the Council House and he was showing her how to use it. Presently their curiosity was satisfied, they could see no traces of bloodshed from their position, and after a survey of the empty sky she came round to

the crow's nest. And there she saw two little black figures, so small it was hard to believe they were men, one who watched and one who gesticulated with hands outstretched to the silent emptiness of Heaven.

She handed the glass to the man. He looked and exclaimed:

"I believe it is the Master. Yes. I am sure. It is the Master!"

He lowered the glass and looked at her. "Waving his hands about almost as if he was praying. I wonder what he is up to. Worshipping the sun? There weren't Parsees in this country in his time, were there?"

He looked again. "He's stopped it now. It was a chance attitude, I suppose." He put down the glass and became meditative. "He won't have anything to do but enjoy himself—just enjoy himself. Ostrog will boss the show of course. Ostrog will have to, because of keeping all these Laborer fools in bounds. Them and their song! And got it all by sleeping, dear eyes—just sleeping. It's a wonderful world."

CHAPTER XV

Prominent People

THE state apartments of the Wind Vane Keeper would have seemed astonishingly intricate to Graham had he entered them fresh from his nineteenth century life, but already he was growing accustomed to the scale of the new time. They can scarcely be described as halls and rooms, seeing that a complicated system of arches, bridges, passages and galleries divided and united every part of the great space. He came out through one of the now familiar sliding panels upon a plateau or landing at the head of a flight of very broad and gentle steps, with men and women far more brilliantly dressed than any he had hitherto seen ascending and descending. From this position he looked down a vista of intricate ornament in lustreless white and mauve and purple, spanned by bridges that seemed wrought of porcelain and filigree, and terminating far off in a cloudy mystery of perforated screens.

Glancing upward, he saw tier above tier of ascending galleries with faces looking down upon him. The air was full of the babble of innumerable voices of a music that descended from above, a gay and exhilarating music whose source he never discovered.

The central aisle was thick with people, but by no means uncomfortably crowded; altogether that assembly must have numbered many thousands. They were brilliantly, even fantastically dressed, the men as fancifully as the women, for the sobering influence of the Puritan conception of dignity upon masculine dress had long since passed away. The hair of the men, too, though it was rarely worn long, was commonly curled in a manner that suggested the barber, and baldness had vanished from the earth. Frizzy straight-cut masses that would have charmed Rossetti abounded, and one gentleman, who was pointed out to Graham under the mysterious title of an "amorist," wore his hair in two becoming plaits *à la* Marguerite. The pigtail was in evidence; it would seem that citizens of Chinese extraction were no longer ashamed of their race. There was little uniformity of fashion apparent in the forms of clothing worn. The more shapely men displayed their symmetry in trunk hose, and here were puffs and slashes, and there a cloak and there a robe. The fashions of the days of Leo the Tenth were perhaps the prevailing influence, but the aesthetic conceptions of the far east were also patent. Masculine embonpoint, which, in Victorian times, would have been subjected to the tightly buttoned perils, the ruthless exaggeration of tight-legged tight-armed evening dress, now formed but the basis of a wealth of dignity and drooping folds. Graceful slenderness abounded also. To Graham, a typically stiff man

from a typically stiff period, not only did these men seem altogether too graceful in person, but altogether too expressive in their vividly expressive faces. They gesticulated, they expressed surprise, interest, amusement, above all, they expressed the emotions excited in their minds by the ladies about them with astonishing frankness. Even at the first glance it was evident that women were in a great majority.

The ladies in the company of these gentlemen displayed in dress, bearing and manner alike, less emphasis and more intricacy. Some affected a classical simplicity of robing and subtlety of fold, after the fashion of the First French Empire, and flashed conquering arms and shoulders as Graham passed. Others had closely-fitting dresses without seam or belt at the waist, sometimes with long fold falling from the shoulders. The delightful confidences of evening dress had not been diminished by the passage of two centuries.

Everyone's movements seemed graceful. Graham remarked to Lincoln that he saw men as Raphael's cartoons walking, and Lincoln told him that the attainment of an appropriate set of gestures was part of every rich person's education. The Master's entry was greeted with a sort of tittering applause, but these people showed their distinguished manners by not crowding upon him nor annoying him by any persistent scrutiny, as he descended the steps towards the floor of the aisle.

He had already learnt from Lincoln that these were the leaders of existing London society; almost every person there that night was either a powerful official or the immediate connection of a powerful official. Many had returned from the European Pleasure Cities expressly to welcome him. The aeronautic authorities, whose defection had played a part in the overthrow of the Council only second to Graham's were very prominent, and so, too, was the Wind Vane Control. Amongst others there were several of the more prominent officers of the Food Trust; the controller of the European Pigeries had a particularly melancholy and interesting countenance and a daintily cynical manner. A bishop in full canonicals passed athwart Graham's vision, conversing with a gentleman dressed exactly like the traditional Chaucer, including even the laurel wreath.

"Who is that?" he asked almost involuntarily.

"The Bishop of London," said Lincoln.

"No—the other, I mean."

"Poet Laureate."

"You still—?"

"He doesn't make poetry, of course. He's a cousin of Wotton—one of the Councillors. But he's one of the Red Rose Royalists—a delightful club—and they keep up the tradition of these things."

"Asano told me there was a King."

"The King doesn't belong. They had to expel him. It's too Stuart blood, I suppose; but really—"

"The Moor?"

"Far too much."

Graham did not quite follow all this, but it seemed part of the general inversion of the new age. He bowed condescendingly to his first introduction. It was evident that subtle distinctions of class prevailed even in this assembly, that only to a small proportion of the guests, to an inner group, did Lincoln consider it appropriate to introduce him. This first introduction was the Master Aeronaut a man whose sun-tanned face contrasted oddly with the delicate complexions about him. Just at present his critical defection from the Council made him a very important person indeed.

His manner contrasted very favorably, according to Graham's ideas, with the general bearing. He made a few commonplace remarks, assurances of loyalty and frank inquiries about the Master's health. His manner was breezy, his accent lacked the easy staccato of latter-day English. He made it admirably clear to Graham

that he was a bluff "aerial dog"—he used that phrase—that there was no nonsense about him, that he was a thoroughly manly fellow and old-fashioned at that, that he didn't profess to know much, and that what he did not know was not worth knowing. He made a manly bow, ostentatiously free from obsequiousness, and passed.

"I am glad to see that type endures," said Graham.

"Phonographs and kinematographs," said Lincoln, a little spitefully. "He has studied from the life." Graham glanced at the burly form again. It was oddly reminiscent.

"As a matter of fact we bought him," said Lincoln. "Partly. And partly he was afraid of Ostrog. Everything rested with him."

He turned sharply to introduce the Surveyor-General of the Public School Trust. This person was a willowy figure in a blue-grey academic gown, he beamed down upon Graham through *pince-nez* of a Victorian pattern, and illustrated his remarks by gestures of a beautifully manicured hand. Graham was immediately interested in this gentleman's functions, and asked him a number of singularly direct questions. The Surveyor-General seemed quietly amused at the Master's fundamental bluntness. He was a little vague as to the monopoly of education his Company possessed; it was done by contract with the syndicate that ran the numerous London Municipalities, but he waxed enthusiastic over educational progress since the Victorian times. "We have conquered Cram," he said, "completely conquered Cram—there is not an examination left in the world. Aren't you glad?"

"How do you get the work done?" asked Graham.

"We make it attractive—as attractive as possible. And if it does not attract then—we let it go. We cover an immense field."

HE proceeded to details, and they had a lengthy conversation. The Surveyor-General mentioned the names of Pestalozzi and Froebel with profound respect, although he displayed no intimacy with their epoch-making words. Graham learnt that University Extension still existed in a modified form. "There is a certain type of girl, for example," said the Surveyor-General, dilating with a sense of his usefulness, "with a perfect passion for severe studies—when they are not too difficult you know. We cater to them by the thousand. At this moment," he said with a Napoleonic touch, "nearly five hundred phonographs are lecturing in different parts of London on the influence exercised by Plato and Swift on the love affairs of Shelley, Hazlitt, and Burns. And afterwards they write essays on the lectures, and the names in order of merit are put in conspicuous places. You see how your little germ has grown? The illiterate middle-class of your days has quite passed away."

"About the public elementary schools," said Graham. "Do you control them?"

The Surveyor-General did, "entirely." Now Graham, in his later democratic days, had taken a keen interest in these and his questioning quickened. Certain casual phrases that had fallen from the old man with whom he had talked in the darkness recurred to him. The Surveyor-General, in effect, endorsed the old man's words. "We have abolished Cram," he said, a phrase Graham was beginning to interpret as the abolition of all sustained work. The Surveyor-General became sentimental. "We try and make the elementary schools very pleasant for the little children. They will have to work so soon. Just a few simple principles—obedience—industry."

"You teach them very little?"

"Why should we? It only leads to trouble and discontent. We amuse them. Even as it is—there are

troubles—agitations. Where the laborers get the ideas, one cannot tell. They tell one another. There are socialistic dreams—anarchy even! Agitators *will* get to work among them. I take it—I have always taken it—that my foremost duty is to fight against popular discontent. Why should people be made unhappy,”

“I wonder,” said Graham thoughtfully. “But there are a great many things I want to know.”

Lincoln, who had stood watching Graham’s face throughout the conversation, intervened. “There are others,” he said in an undertone.

The Surveyor-General of schools gesticulated himself away. “Perhaps,” said Lincoln, intercepting a casual glance, “you would like to know some of these ladies?”

The daughter of the Manager of the Piggeries of the European Food Trust was a particularly charming little person with red hair and animated blue eyes. Lincoln left him awhile to converse with her, and she displayed herself as quite an enthusiast for the “dear old times,” as she called them, that had seen the beginning of his trance. As she talked she smiled, and her eyes smiled in a manner that demanded reciprocity.

“I have tried,” she said, “countless times—to imagine those old romantic days. And to you—they are memories. How strange and crowded the world must seem to you! I have seen photographs and pictures of the old times, the little isolated houses built of bricks made out of burnt mud and all black with soot from your fires, the railway bridges, the simple advertisements, the solemn savage Puritanical men in strange black coats and those tall hats of theirs, iron railway trains on iron bridges overhead, horses and cattle, and even dogs running half wild about the streets. And suddenly, you have come into this!”

“Into this,” said Graham.

“Out of your life—out of all that was familiar.”

“The old life was not a happy one,” said Graham. “I do not regret that.”

She looked at him quickly. There was a brief pause. She sighed encouragingly. “No?”

“No,” said Graham. “It was a little life—and unmeaning. But this—. We thought the world complex and crowded and civilised enough. Yet I see—although in this world I am barely four days old—looking back on my own time, that it was a queer, barbaric time—the mere beginning of this new order. The mere beginning of this new order. You will find it hard to understand how little I know.”

“You may ask me what you like,” she said, smiling at him.

“Then tell me who these people are. I’m still very much in the dark about them. It’s puzzling. Are there any Generals?”

“Men in hats and feathers?”

“Of course not. No. I suppose they are the men who control the great public businesses. Who is that distinguished looking man?”

“That? He’s a most important officer. That is Mordean. He is managing director of the Antibillious Pill Company. I have heard that his workers sometimes urn out a myriad myriad pills a day in twenty-four hours. Fancy a myriad myriad!”

“A myriad myriad. No wonder he looks proud,” said Graham. “Pills! What a wonderful time it is! That man in purple?”

“He is not quite one of the inner circle, you know. But we like him. He is really clever and very amusing. He is one of the heads of the Medical Faculty of our London University. All medical men, you know, are shareholders in the Medical Faculty Company, and wear that purple. You have to be—to be qualified. But of course, people who are paid by fees for *doing* some-

thing—” She smiled away the social pretensions of all such people.

“Are any of your great artists or authors here?”

“No authors. They are mostly such queer people—and so preoccupied about themselves. And they quarrel so dreadfully! They will fight, some of them, for precedence on staircases! Dreadful, isn’t it? But I think Wraysbury, the fashionable capillotomist, is here. From Capri.”

“Capillotomist,” said Graham. “Ah! I remember. An artist! Why not?”

“We have to cultivate him,” she said apologetically. “Our heads are in his hands.” She smiled.

Graham hesitated at the invited compliment, but his glance was expressive. “Have the arts grown with the rest of civilised things?” he said. “Who are your great painters?”

She looked at him doubtfully. Then laughed. “For a moment,” she said, “I thought you meant—” She laughed again. “You mean, of course, those good men you used to think so much of because they could cover great spaces of canvas with oil-colours? Great oblongs. And people used to put the things in gilt frames and hang them up in rows in their square rooms. We haven’t any. People grew tired of that sort of thing.”

“But what did you think I meant?”

She put a finger significantly on a cheek whose glow was above suspicion, and smiled and looked very arch and pretty and inviting. “And here,” and she indicated her eyelid.

GRAHAM had an adventurous moment. Then a grotesque memory of a picture he had somewhere seen of Uncle Toby and the Widow flashed across his mind. An archaic shame came upon him. He became acutely aware that he was visible to a great number of interested people. “I see,” he remarked inadequately. He turned awkwardly away from her fascinating facility. He looked about him to meet a number of eyes that immediately occupied themselves with other things. Possibly he coloured a little. “Who is that talking with the lady in saffron?” he asked, avoiding her eyes.

The person in question he learnt was one of the great organisers of the American theatres just fresh from a gigantic production at Mexico. His face reminded Graham of a bust of Caligula. Another striking looking man was the Black Labour Master. The phrase at the time made no deep impression, but afterwards it recurred;—the Black Labour Master? The little lady, in no degree embarrassed, pointed out to him a charming little woman as one of the subsidiary wives of the Anglican Bishop of London. She added encomiums on the episcopal courage—hitherto there had been a rule of clerical monogamy—“neither a natural nor an expedient condition of things. Why should the natural development of the affections be dwarfed and restricted because a man is a priest?”

“And, by the bye,” she added, “are you an Anglican?” Graham was on the verge of hesitating inquiries about the status of a “subsidiary wife,” apparently an euphemistic phrase, when Lincoln’s return broke off this very suggestive and interesting conversation. They crossed the aisle to where a tall man in crimson, and two charming persons in Burmese costume (as it seemed to him) awaited him diffidently. From their civilities he passed to other presentations.

In a little while his multitudinous impressions began to organise themselves into a general effect. At first the glitter of the gathering had raised all the democrat in Graham; he had felt hostile and satirical. But it is not in human nature to resist an atmosphere of courteous regard. Soon the music, the light, the play of colours, the shining arms and shoulders about him, the touch of hands, the transient interest of smiling faces,

the frothing sound of skilfully modulated voices, the atmosphere of compliment, interest and respect, had woven together into a fabric of indisputable pleasure. Graham for a time forgot his spacious resolutions. He gave way insensibly to the intoxication of the position that was conceded him, his manner became less conscious, more convincingly regal, his feet walked assuredly, the black robe fell with a bolder fold and pride ennobled his voice. After all this was a brilliant interesting world.

His glance went approvingly over the shifting colours of the people, it rested here and there in kindly criticism upon a face. Presently it occurred to him that he owed some apology to the charming little person with the red hair and blue eyes. He felt guilty of a clumsy snub. It was not princely to ignore her advances, even if his policy necessitated their rejection. He wondered if he should see her again. And suddenly a little thing touched all the glamour of this brilliant gathering and changed its quality.

He looked up and saw passing across a bridge of porcelain and looking down upon him, a face that was almost immediately hidden, the face of the girl he had seen overnight in the little room beyond the theatre after his escape from the Council. And she was looking with much the same expression of curious expectation, of uncertain intentness, upon his proceedings. For the moment he did not remember when he had seen her, and then with recognition came a vague memory of the stirring emotions of their first encounter. But the dancing web of melody about him kept the air of that great marching song from his memory.

The lady to whom he was talking repeated her remark, and Graham recalled himself to the quasi-regal flirtation upon which he was engaged.

But from that moment a vague restlessness, a feeling that grew to dissatisfaction, came into his mind. He was troubled as if by some half forgotten duty, by the sense of things important slipping from him amidst this light and brilliance. The attraction that these bright ladies who crowded about him were beginning to exercise ceased. He no longer made vague and clumsy responses to the subtly amorous advances that he was now assured were being made to him, and his eyes wandered for another sight of that face that had appealed so strongly to his sense of beauty. But he did not see her again until he was awaiting Lincoln's return to leave this assembly. In answer to his request Lincoln had promised that an attempt should be made to fly that afternoon, if the weather permitted. He had gone to make certain necessary arrangements.

Graham was in one of the upper galleries in conversation with a bright-eyed lady on the subject of Eadhamite—the subject was his choice and not hers. He had interrupted her warm assurances of personal devotion with a matter-of-fact inquiry. He found her, as he had already found several other latter-day women that night, less well informed than charming. Suddenly, struggling against the eddying drift of nearer melody, the song of the Revolt, the great song he had heard in the Hall, hoarse and massive, came beating down to him.

He glanced up startled, and perceived above him an *oeil de boeuf* through which this song had come, and beyond, the upper courses of cable, the blue haze, and the pendant fabric of the lights of the public ways. He heard the song break into a tumult of voices and cease. But now he perceived quite clearly the drone and tumult of the moving platforms and a murmur of many people. He had a vague persuasion that he could not account for, a sort of instinctive feeling that outside in the ways a huge crowd must be watching this place in which their Master amused himself. He wondered what they might be thinking.

Though the song had stopped so abruptly, though the special music of this gathering reasserted itself, the

motif of the marching song, once it had begun, lingered in his mind.

The bright-eyed lady was still struggling with the mysteries of Eadhamite when he perceived the girl he had seen in the theatre again. She was coming now along the gallery towards him; he saw her first before she saw him. She was dressed in a faintly luminous grey, her dark hair about her brows was like a cloud, and as he saw her the cold light from the circular opening into the ways fell upon her downcast face.

The lady in trouble about the Eadhamite saw the change in his expression, and grasped her opportunity to escape. "Would you care to know that girl, Sire?" she asked boldly. "She is Helen Wotton—a niece of Ostrog's. She knows a great many serious things. She is one of the most serious persons alive. I am sure you will like her."

In another moment Graham was talking to the girl, and the bright-eyed lady had fluttered away.

"I remember you quite well," said Graham. "You were in that little room. When all the people were singing and beating time with their feet. Before I walked across the Hall."

Her momentary embarrassment passed. She looked up at him, and her face was steady. "It was wonderful," she said, hesitated, and spoke with a sudden effort. "All those people would have died for you, Sire. Countless people did die for you that night."

Her face glowed. She glanced swiftly aside to see that no other heard her words.

Lincoln appeared some way off along the gallery, making his way through the press towards them. She saw him and turned to Graham strangely eager, with a swift change to confidence and intimacy. "Sire," she said quickly, "I cannot tell you now and here. But the common people are very unhappy; they are oppressed—they are misgoverned. Do not forget the people, who faced death—death that you might live."

"I know nothing—" began Graham.

"I cannot tell you now."

Lincoln's face appeared close to them. He bowed an apology to the girl.

"You find the new world pleasant, Sire?" asked Lincoln, with smiling deference, and indicating the space and splendour of the gathering by one comprehensive gesture. "At any rate, you find it changed."

"Yes," said Graham, "changed. And yet, after all, not so greatly changed."

"Wait till you are in the air," said Lincoln. "The wind has fallen; even now an aeropile awaits you."

The girl's attitude awaited dismissal.

Graham glanced at her face, was on the verge of a question, found a warning in her expression, bowed to her and turned to accompany Lincoln.

CHAPTER XVI

The Aeropile

FOR a while, as Graham went through the passages of the Wind-Vane offices with Lincoln, he was preoccupied. But, by an effort, he attended to the things which Lincoln was saying. Soon his preoccupation vanished. Lincoln was talking of flying. Graham had a strong desire to know more of this new human attainment. He began to ply Lincoln with questions. He had followed the crude beginnings of aerial navigation very keenly in his previous life; he was delighted to find the familiar names of Maxim and Pilcher, Langley and Chanute, and, above all, of the aerial proto-martyr Lillienthal, still honored by men.

Even during his previous life two lines of investigation had pointed clearly to two distinct types of contrivance as possible, and both of these had been realized. On the one hand was the great engine-driven aeroplane, a double row of horizontal floats with a big aerial screw



The aeropile.

behind, and on the other the nimbler aeropile. The aeroplanes flew safely only in a calm or moderate wind, and sudden storms, occurrences that were now accurately predictable, rendered them for all practical purposes useless. They were built of enormous size—the usual stretch of wing being six hundred feet or more, and the length of the fabric a thousand feet. They were for passenger traffic alone. The lightly swung car they carried was from a hundred to a hundred and fifty feet in length. It was hung in a peculiar manner in order to minimize the complex vibration that even a moderate wind produced, and for the same reason the little seats within the car—each passenger remained seated during the voyage—were slung with great freedom of movement. The starting of the mechanism was only possible from a gigantic car on the rail of a specially constructed stage. Graham had seen these vast stages, the flying stages, from the crow's nest very well. Six huge blank areas they were, with a giant "carrier" stage on each.

The choice of descent was equally circumscribed, an accurately plane surface being needed for safe grounding. Apart from the destruction that would have been caused by the descent of this great expanse of sail and metal, and the impossibility of its rising again, the concussion of an irregular surface, a tree-set hillside, for instance, or an embankment, would be sufficient to pierce

or damage the framework, to smash the ribs of the body, and perhaps kill those aboard.

At first Graham felt disappointed with these cumbersome contrivances, but he speedily grasped the fact that smaller machines would have been unremunerative, for the simple reason that their carrying power would be disproportionately diminished with diminished size. Moreover, the huge size of these things enabled them—and it was a consideration of primary importance—to traverse the air at enormous speeds, and so run no risks of unanticipated weather. The briefest journey performed, that from London to Paris, took about three-quarters of an hour, but the velocity attained was not high; the leap to New York occupied about two hours, and by timing oneself carefully at the intermediate stations it was possible in quiet weather to go around the world in a day.

The little aeropiles (as for no particular reason they were distinctively called) were of an altogether different type. Several of these were going to and fro in the air. They were designed to carry only one or two persons, and their manufacture and maintenance was so costly as to render them the monopoly of the richer sort of people. Their sails, which were brilliantly colored, consisted only of two pairs of lateral air floats in the same plane, and of a screw behind. Their small size rendered a descent in any open space neither difficult

nor disagreeable, and it was possible to attach pneumatic wheels or even the ordinary motors for terrestrial traffic to them, and so carry them to a convenient starting place. They required a special sort of swift car to throw them into the air, but such a car was efficient in any open place clear of high buildings or trees. Human aeronautics, Graham perceived, were evidently still a long way behind the instinctive gift of the albatross or the fly-catcher. One great influence that might have brought the aeropile to a more rapid perfection had been withheld; these inventions had never been used in warfare. The last great international struggle had occurred before the usurpation of the Council.

The Flying Stages of London were collected together in an irregular crescent on the southern side of the river. They formed three groups of two each and retained the names of ancient suburban hills or villages. They were named in order, Roehampton, Wimbledon Park, Streatham, Norwood, Blackheath, and Shooter's Hill. They were uniform structures rising high above the general roof surfaces. Each was about four thousand yards long and a thousand broad, and constructed of the compound of aluminum and iron that had replaced iron in architecture. Their higher tiers formed an openwork of girders through which lifts and staircases ascended. The upper surface was a uniform expanse, with portions—the starting carriers—that could be raised and were then able to run on very slightly inclined rails to the end of the fabric. Save for any aeropiles or aeroplanes that were in port these open surfaces were kept clear for arrivals.

During the adjustment of the aeroplanes it was the custom for passengers to wait in the system of theatres, restaurants, news-rooms, and places of pleasure and indulgence of various sorts that interwove with the prosperous shops below. This portion of London was in consequence commonly the gayest of all its districts, with something of the meretricious gaiety of a seaport or city of hotels. And for those who took a more serious view of aeronautics, the religious quarters had flung out an attractive colony of devotional chapels, while a host of brilliant medical establishments competed to supply physical preparatives for the journey. At various levels through the mass of chambers and passages beneath these, ran, in addition to the main moving ways of the city which laced and gathered here, a complex system of special passages and lifts and slides, for the convenient interchange of people and luggage between stage and stage. And a distinctive feature of the architecture of this section was the ostentatious massiveness of the metal piers and girders that everywhere broke the vistas and spanned the halls and passages, crowding and twining up to meet the weight of the stages and the weighty impact of the aeroplanes overhead.

Graham went to the flying stages by the public ways. He was accompanied by Asano, his Japanese attendant. Lincoln was called away by Ostrog, who was busy with his administrative concerns. A strong guard of the Wind-Vane police awaited the Master outside the Wind-Vane offices, and they cleared a space for him on the upper moving platform. His passage to the flying stages was unexpected, nevertheless a considerable crowd gathered and followed him to his destination. As he went along, he could hear the people shouting his name, and saw numberless men and women and children in blue come swarming up the staircases in the central path, gesticulating and shouting. He could not hear what they shouted. He was struck again by the evident existence of a vulgar dialect among the poor of the city. When at last he descended, his guards were immediately surrounded by a dense excited crowd. Afterwards it occurred to him that some had attempted to reach him with petitions. His guards cleared a passage for him with difficulty.

HE found an aeropile in charge of an aeronaut awaiting him on the westward stage. Seen close this mechanism was no longer small. As it lay on its launching carrier upon the wide expanse of the flying stage, its aluminum body skeleton was as big as the hull of a twenty-ton yacht. Its lateral supporting sails braced and stayed with metal nerves almost like the nerves of a bee's wing, and made of some sort of glassy artificial membrane, cast their shadow over many hundreds of square yards. The chairs for the engineer and his passenger hung free to swing by a complex tackle, within the protecting ribs of the frame and well abaft the middle. The passenger's chair was protected by a wind-guard and guarded about with metallic rods carrying air cushions. It could, if desired, be completely closed in, but Graham was anxious for novel experiences, and desired that it should be left open. The aeronaut sat behind a glass that sheltered his face. The passenger could secure himself firmly in his seat, and this was almost unavoidable on landing, or he could move along by means of a little rail and rod to a locker at the stem of the machine, where his personal luggage, his wraps and restoratives were placed, and which also with the seats, served as a makeweight to the parts of the central engine that projected to the propeller at the stern.

The engine was very simple in appearance. Asano, pointing out the parts of this apparatus to him, told him that, like the gas-engine of Victorian days, it was of the explosive type, burning a small drop of a substance called "fomile" at each stroke. It consisted simply of reservoir and piston about the long fluted crank of the propeller shaft. So much Graham saw of the machine.

The flying stage about him was empty save for Asano and their suite of attendants. Directed by the aeronaut he placed himself in his seat. He then drank a mixture containing ergot—a dose, he learnt, invariably administered to those about to fly, and designed to counteract the possible effect of diminished air pressure upon the system. Having done so, he declared himself ready for the journey. Asano took the empty glass from him, stepped through the bars of the hull, and stood below on the stage and waved his hand. Suddenly he seemed to glide along the stage to the right and vanish.

The engine was beating, the propeller spinning, and for a second the stage and the buildings beyond were gliding swiftly and horizontally past Graham's eye; then these things seemed to tilt up abruptly. He gripped the little rods on either side of him instinctively. He felt himself moving upward, heard the air whistle over the top of the wind screen. The propeller screw moved round with powerful rhythmic impulses—one, two, three, pause; one, two, three—which the engineer controlled very delicately. The machine began a quivering vibration that continued throughout the flight, and the roof areas seemed running away to starboard very quickly and growing rapidly smaller. He looked from the face of the engineer through the ribs of the machine. Looking sideways, there was nothing very startling in what he saw—a rapid funicular railway might have given the same sensations. He recognised the Council House and the Highgate Ridge. And then he looked straight down between his feet.

For a moment physical terror possessed him, a passionate sense of insecurity. He held tight. For a second or so he could not lift his eyes. Some hundred feet or more sheer below him was one of the big wind-vanes of south-west London, and beyond it the southernmost flying stage crowded with little black dots. These things seemed to be falling away from him. For a second he had an impulse to pursue the earth. He set his teeth, he lifted his eyes by a muscular effort, and the moment of panic passed.

He remained for a space with his teeth set hard, his eyes staring into the sky. Throb, throb, throb—beat,

went the engine; throb, throb, throb,—beat. He gripped his bars tightly, glanced at the aeronaut, and saw a smile upon his sun-tanned face. He smiled in return—perhaps a little artificially. "A little strange at first," he shouted before he recalled his dignity. But he dared not look down again for some time. He stared over the aeronaut's head to where a rim of vague blue horizon crept up the sky. For a little while he could not banish the thought of possible accidents from his mind. Throb, throb, throb—beat; suppose some trivial screw went wrong in that supporting engine! Suppose—! He made a grim effort to dismiss all such suppositions. After a while they did at least abandon the foreground of his thoughts. And up he went steadily, higher and higher into the clear air.

Once the mental shock of moving unsupported through the air was over, his sensations ceased to be unpleasant, became very speedily pleasurable. He had been warned of air sickness. But he found the pulsating movement of the aeropile as it drove up the faint south-west breeze was very little in excess of the pitching of a boat head on to broad rollers in a moderate gale, and he was constitutionally a good sailor. And the keenness of the more rarefied air into which they ascended produced a sense of lightness and exhilaration. He looked up and saw the blue sky above fretted with cirrus clouds. His eye came cautiously down through the ribs and bars to a shining flight of white birds that hung in the lower sky. For a space he watched these. Then going lower and less apprehensively, he saw the slender figure of the Wind-Vane keeper's crow's nest shining golden in the sunlight and growing smaller every moment. As his eye fell with more confidence now, there came a blue line of hills, and then London, already to leeward, an intricate space of roofing. Its near edge came sharp and clear and banished his last apprehensions in a shock of surprise. For the boundary of London was like a wall, like a cliff, a steep fall of three or four hundred feet, a frontage broken only by terraces here and there, a complex decorative facade.

That gradual passage of town into country through an extensive sponge of suburbs, which was so characteristic a feature of the great cities of the nineteenth century, existed no longer. Nothing remained of it but a waste of ruins here, variegated and dense with thickets of the heterogeneous growths that had once adorned the gardens of the belt, interspersed among levelled brown patches of sown ground, and verdant stretches of winter greens. The latter even spread among the vestiges of houses. But for the most part the reefs and skerries of ruins, the wreckage of suburban villas, stood among their streets and roads, queer islands amidst the levelled expanses of green and brown, abandoned indeed by the inhabitants years since, but too substantial, it seemed, to be cleared out of the way of the wholesale horticultural mechanisms of the time.

The vegetation of this waste undulated and frothed amidst the countless cells of crumbling house walls, and broke along the foot of the city wall in a surf of bramble and holly and ivy and teasle and tall grasses. Here and there gaudy pleasure palaces towered amidst the puny remains of Victorian times, and cable ways slanted to them from the city. That winter day they seemed deserted. Deserted, too, were the artificial gardens among the ruins. The city limits were indeed as sharply defined as in the ancient days when the gates were shut at nightfall and the robber foeman prowled to the very walls. A huge semi-circular throat poured out a vigorous traffic upon the Eadhamite Bath Road. So the first prospect of the world beyond the city flashed on Graham, and dwindled. And when at last he could look vertically downward again, he saw below him the vegetable fields of the Thames valley—innumerable minute oblongs of

ruddy brown, intersected by shining threads, the sewage ditches.

HIS exhilaration increased rapidly, became a sort of intoxication. He found himself drawing deep breaths of air, laughing aloud, desiring to shout. After a time that desire became too strong for him, and he shouted.

The machine had now risen as high as was customary with aeropiles, and they began to curve about towards the south. Steering, Graham perceived, was effected by the opening or closing of one or two thin strips of membrane in one or other of the otherwise rigid wings, and by the movement of the whole engine backward or forward along its supports. The aeronaut set the engine gliding slowly forward along its rail and opened the valve of the leeward wing until the stem of the aeropile was horizontal and pointing southward. And in that direction they drove with a slight list to leeward, and with a slow alternation of movement, first a short, sharp ascent and then a long downward glide that was very swift and pleasing. During these downward glides the propeller was inactive altogether. These ascents gave Graham a glorious sense of successful effort; the descents through the rarefied air were beyond all experience. He wanted never to leave the upper air again.

For a time he was intent upon the minute details of the landscape that ran swiftly northward beneath him. Its minute, clear detail pleased him exceedingly. He was impressed by the ruin of the houses that had once dotted the country, by the vast treeless expanse of country from which all farms and villages had gone, save for crumbling ruins. He had known the thing was so, but seeing it so was an altogether different matter. He tried to make out places he had known within the hollow basin of the world below, but at first he could distinguish no data that the Thames valley was left behind. Soon, however, they were driving over a sharp chalk hill that he recognized as the Guildford Hog's Back, because of the familiar outline of the gorge at its eastward end, and because of the ruins of the town that rose steeply on either lip of this gorge. And from that he made out other points, Leith Hill, the sandy wastes of Aldershot, and so forth. The Downs escarpment was set with gigantic slow-moving wind-wheels. Save where the broad Eadhamite Portsmouth Road, thickly dotted with rushing shapes, followed the course of the old railway, the gorge of the Wey was choked with thickets.

The whole expanse of the Downs escarpment, so far as the grey haze permitted him to see, was set with wind-wheels to which the largest of the city was but a younger brother. They stirred with a stately motion before the south-west wind. And here and there were patches dotted with the sheep of the British Food Trust, and here and there a mounted shepherd made a spot of black. Then rushing under the stern of the aeropile came the Wealden Heights, the line of Hindhead, Pitch Hill, and Leith Hill, with a second row of wind-wheels that seemed striving to rob the downland whirlers of their share of breeze. The purple heather was speckled with yellow gorse, and on the further side a drove of black oxen stampeded before a couple of mounted men. Swiftly these swept behind, and dwindled and lost color, and became scarce moving specks that were swallowed up in haze.

And when these had vanished in the distance Graham heard a peewit wailing close at hand. He perceived he was now above the South Downs, and staring over his shoulder saw the battlements of Portsmouth Landing Stage towering over the ridge of Portsdown Hill. In another moment there came into sight a spread of shipping like floating cities, the little white cliffs of the Needles dwarfed and sunlit, and the grey and glittering waters of the narrow sea. They seemed to leap the Solent in a moment, and in a few seconds the Isle of

Wight was running past, and then beneath him spread a wider and wider extent of sea, here purple with the shadow of a cloud, here grey, here a burnished mirror, and here a spread of cloudy greenish blue. The Isle of Wight grew smaller and smaller. In a few more minutes a strip of grey haze detached itself from other strips that were clouds, descended out of the sky and became a coastline—sunlit and pleasant—the coast of northern France. It rose, it took color, became definite and detailed, and the counterpart of the Downland of England was speeding by below.

In a little time, as it seemed, Paris came above the horizon, and hung there for a space, and sank out of sight again as the aeroplane circled about to the north again. But he perceived the Eiffel Tower still standing, and beside it a huge dome surmounted by a pin-point Colossus. And he perceived, too, though he did not understand it at the time, a slanting drift of smoke. The aeronaut said something about "trouble in the underways," that Graham did not heed at the time. But he marked the minarets and towers and slender masses that streamed skyward above the city wind-vanes, and knew that in the matter of grace at least Paris still kept in front of her larger rival. And even as he looked a pale blue shape ascended very swiftly from the city like a dead leaf driving up before a gale. It curved round and soared towards them growing rapidly larger and larger. The aeronaut was saying something. "What?" said Graham, loth to take his eyes from this. "Aeroplane, Sire," bawled the aeronaut pointing.

They rose and curved about northward as it drew nearer. Nearer it came and nearer, larger and larger. The throb, throb, throb—beat, of the aeropile's flight, that had seemed so potent and swift, suddenly appeared slow by comparison with this tremendous rush. How great the monster seemed, how swift and ready! It passed quite closely beneath them, driving along silently, a vast spread of wire-netting translucent wings, a thing alive. Graham had a momentary glimpse of the rows and rows of wrapped-up passengers, slung in their little cradles behind wind-screens, of a white-clothed engineer crawling against the gale along a ladder way, of spouting engines beating together, of the whirling wind screw, and of a wide waste of wing. He exulted in the sight. And in an instant the thing had passed.

It rose slightly and their own little wings swayed in the rush of its flight. It fell and grew smaller. Scarcely had they moved, as it seemed, before it was again only a flat blue thing that dwindled in the sky. This was the aeroplane that went to and fro between London and Paris. In fair weather and in peaceful times it came and went four times a day.

They beat across the Channel, slowly as it seemed now, to Graham's enlarged ideas, and Beachy Head rose greyly to the left of them.

"Land," called the aeronaut, his voice small against the whistling of the air over the wind-screen.

"Not yet," bawled Graham, laughing. "Not land yet. I want to learn more of this machine."

"I meant—" said the aeronaut.

"I want to learn more of this machine," repeated Graham.

"I'm coming to you," he said, and had flung himself free of his chair and taken a step along the guarded rail between them. He stopped for a moment, and his color changed and his hands tightened. Another step and he was clinging close to the aeronaut. He felt a weight on his shoulder, the pressure of the air. His hat was a whirling speck behind. The wind came in gusts over his wind-screen and blew his hair in streamers past his cheek. The aeronaut made some hasty adjustments for the shifting of the centres of gravity and pressure.

"I want to have these things explained," said Graham. "What do you do when you move that engine forward?"

The aeronaut hesitated. Then he answered, "They are complex, Sire."

"I don't mind," shouted Graham. "I don't mind."

There was a moment's pause. "Aeronautics is the secret—the privilege—"

"I know. But I'm the Master, and I mean to know." He laughed, full of this novel realization of power that was his gift from the upper air.

The aeropile curved about, and the keen fresh wind cut across Graham's face and his garment lugged at his body as the stem pointed round to the west. The two men looked into each other's eyes.

"Sire, there are rules—"

"Not where I am concerned," said Graham. "You seem to forget."

The aeronaut scrutinized his face. "No," he said. "I do not forget, Sire. But in all the earth—no man who is not a sworn aeronaut—has ever a chance. They come as passengers—"

"I have heard something of the sort. But I'm not going to argue these points. Do you know why I have slept two hundred years? To fly!"

"Sire," said the aeronaut, "the rules—if I break the rules—"

Graham waved the penalties aside.

"Then if you will watch me—"

"No," said Graham, swaying and gripping tight as the machine lifted its nose again for an ascent. "That's not my game. I want to do it myself. Do it myself if I smash for it! No! I will. See. I am going to clamber by this—to come and share your seat. Steady! I mean to fly of my own accord if I smash at the end of it. I will have something to pay for my sleep. Of all other things—. In my past it was my dream to fly. Now—keep your balance."

"A dozen spies are watching me, Sire!"

Graham's temper was at an end. Perhaps he chose it should be. He swore. He swung himself round the intervening mass of levers and the aeropile swayed.

"Am I Master of the earth?" he said. "Or is your Society? No. Take your hands off those levers and hold my wrists. Yes—so. And now, how do we turn her nose down to the glide?"

"Sire," said the aeronaut.

"What is it?"

"You will protect me?"

"Lord! Yes! If I have to burn London. Now!"

And with that promise Graham bought his first lesson in aerial navigation. "It's clearly to your advantage, this journey," he said with a loud laugh—for the air was like strong wine—"to teach me quickly and well. Do I pull this? Ah! So! Hullo!"

"Back, Sire! Back!"

"Back—right. One—two—three—good God! Ah! Up she goes! But this is living!"

And now the machine began to dance the strangest figures in the air. Now it would sweep round a spiral of scarcely a hundred yards in diameter, now it would rush up into the air and swoop down again, steeply, swiftly, falling like a hawk, to recover in a rushing loop that swept it high again. In one of these descents it seemed driving straight at the drifting park of balloons in the southeast, and only curved about and cleared them by a sudden recovery of dexterity. The extraordinary swiftness and smoothness of the motion, the extraordinary effect of the rarefied air upon his constitution, threw Graham into a careless fury.

But at last a queer incident came to sober him, to send him flying down once more to the crowded life below with all its dark insoluble riddles. As he swooped, came a tap and something flying past, and a drop like a drop of rain. Then as he went on down he saw something like a white rag whirling down in his wake. "What was that?" he asked. "I did not see."

The aeronaut glanced, and then clutched at the lever to recover, for they were sweeping down. When the aeropile was rising again he drew a deep breath and replied, "That," and he indicated the white thing still fluttering down, "was a swan."

"I never saw it," said Graham.

The aeronaut made no answer, and Graham saw little drops upon his forehead.

They drove horizontally while Graham clambered back to the passenger's place out of the lash of the wind. And then came a swift rush down, with the wind-screw whirling to check their fall, and the flying stage growing broad and dark before them. The sun, sinking over the chalk hills in the west, fell with them, and left the sky a blaze of gold.

Soon men could be seen as little specks. He heard a noise coming up to meet him, a noise like the sound of waves upon a pebbly beach, and saw that the roofs about the flying stage were dark with his people rejoicing over his safe return. A dark mass was crushed together under the stage, a darkness stippled with innumerable faces, and quivering with the minute oscillation of waved white handkerchiefs and waving hands.

CHAPTER XVII

Three Days

LINCOLN awaited Graham in an apartment beneath the flying stages. He seemed curious to learn all that had happened, pleased to hear of the extraordinary delight and interest which Graham took in flying. Graham was in a mood of enthusiasm. "I must learn to fly," he cried. "I must master that. I pity all poor souls who have died without this opportunity. The sweet swift air! It is the most wonderful experience in the world."

"You will find our new times full of wonderful experiences," said Lincoln. "I do not know what you will care to do now. We have music that may seem novel."

"For the present," said Graham, "flying holds me. Let me learn more of that. Your aeronaut was saying there is some trades union objection to one's learning."

"There is, I believe," said Lincoln. "But for you—! If you would like to occupy yourself with that, we can make you a sworn aeronaut tomorrow."

Graham expressed his wishes vividly and talked of his sensations for a while. "And as for affairs," he asked abruptly. "How are things going on?"

Lincoln waved affairs aside. "Ostrog will tell you that tomorrow," he said. "Everything is settling down. The Revolution accomplishes itself all over the world. Friction is inevitable here and there, of course; but your rule is assured. You may rest secure with things in Ostrog's hands."

"Would it be possible for me to be made a sworn aeronaut, as you call it, forthwith—before I sleep?" said Graham, pacing. "Then I could be at it the very first thing tomorrow again. . . ."

"It would be possible," said Lincoln thoughtfully. "Quite possible. Indeed, it shall be done." He laughed. "I came prepared to suggest amusements, but you have found one for yourself. I will telephone to the aeronautical offices from here and we will return to your apartments in the Wind-Vane Control. By the time you have dined the aeronauts will be able to come. You don't think that after you have dined, you might prefer—?" He paused.

"Yes," said Graham.

"We have prepared a show of dancers—they have been brought from the Capri theatre."

"I hate ballets," said Graham shortly. "Always did. That other—. That's not what I want to see. We had dancers in the old days. For the matter of that they had them in ancient Egypt. But flying—"

"True," said Lincoln. "Though our dancers—"

"They can afford to wait," said Graham; "they can afford to wait. I know. I'm not a Latin. There's questions I want to ask some expert—about your machinery. I'm keen. I want no distractions."

"You have the world to choose from," said Lincoln, "whatever you want is yours."

Asano appeared, and under the escort of a strong guard they returned through the city streets to Graham's apartments. Far larger crowds had assembled to witness his return than his departure had gathered, and the shouts and cheering of these masses of people sometimes drowned Lincoln's answers to the endless questions Graham's aerial journey had suggested. At first Graham had acknowledged the cheering and cries of the crowd by bows and gestures, but Lincoln warned him that such a recognition would be considered incorrect behavior. Graham, already a little wearied by rhythmic civilities, ignored his subjects for the remainder of his public progress.

Directly they arrived at his apartments Asano departed in search of kinematographic renderings of machinery in motion, and Lincoln despatched Graham's commands for models of machines and small machines to illustrate the various mechanical advances of the last two centuries. The little group of appliances for telegraphic communication attracted the Master so strongly that his delightfully prepared dinner, served by a number of charmingly dexterous girls, waited for a space. The habit of smoking had almost ceased from the face of the earth, but when he expressed a wish for that indulgence, inquiries were made and some excellent cigars were discovered in Florida, and sent to him by pneumatic despatch while the dinner was still in progress. Afterwards came the aeronauts, and a feast of ingenious wonders in the hands of a latter-day engineer. For the time, at any rate, the neat dexterity of counting and numbering machines, building machines, spinning engines, patent doorways, explosive motors, grain and water elevators, slaughter-house machines and harvesting appliances, was more fascinating to Graham than any bayadere. "We were savages," was his refrain, "we were savages. We were in the stone age—compared with this. . . . And what else have you?"

There came also practical psychologists with some very interesting developments in the art of hypnotism. The names of Milne Bramwell, Fechner, Liebault, William James, Myers and Gurney, he found, bore a value now that would have astonished their contemporaries. Several practical applications of psychology were now in general use; it had largely superseded drugs, antiseptics and anaesthetics in medicine; was employed by almost all who had any need of mental concentration. A real enlargement of human faculty seemed to have been effected in this direction. The feats of "calculating boys," the wonders, as Graham had been wont to regard them, of mesmerizers, were now within the range of anyone who could afford the services of a skilled hypnotist. Long ago the old examination methods in education had been destroyed by these expedients. Instead of years of study, candidates had substituted a few weeks of trances, and during the trances expert coaches had simply to repeat all the points necessary for adequate answering, adding a suggestion of the post hypnotic recollection of these points. In process mathematics particularly, this aid had been of singular service, and it was now invariably invoked by such players of chess and games of manual dexterity as were still to be found. In fact, all operations conducted under finite rules, of a quasi-mechanical sort, that is, were now systematically relieved from the wanderings of imagination and emotion, and brought to an unexampled pitch of accuracy. Little children of the laboring classes, so soon as they were of sufficient age to be hypnotized, were thus converted into beautifully

punctual and trustworthy machine minders, and released forthwith from the long, long thoughts of youth. Aeronautical pupils, who gave way to giddiness, could be relieved from their imaginary terrors. In every street were hypnotists ready to print permanent memories upon the mind. If anyone desired to remember a name, a series of numbers, a song or a speech, it could be done by this method, and conversely memories could be effaced, habits removed, and desires eradicated—a sort of psychic surgery was, in fact, in general use. Indignities, humbling experiences, were thus forgotten, amorous widows would obliterate their previous husbands, angry lovers release themselves from their slavery. To graft desires, however, was still impossible, and the facts of thought transference were yet unsystematized. The psychologists illustrated their expositions with some astounding experiments in mnemonics made through the agency of a troupe of pale-faced children in blue.

Graham, like most of the people of his former time, distrusted the hypnotist, or he might then and there have eased his mind of many painful preoccupations. But in spite of Lincoln's assurances, he held to the old theory that to be hypnotized was in some way the surrender of his personality, the abdication of his will. At the banquet of wonderful experiences that were beginning, he wanted very keenly to remain absolutely himself.

THE next day, and another day, and yet another day passed in such interests as these. Each day Graham spent many hours in the glorious entertainment of flying. On the third day he soared across middle France, and within sight of the snow-clad Alps. These vigorous exercises gave him restful sleep, and each day saw a great stride in his health from the spiritless anaemia of his first awakening. And whenever he was not in the air, and awake, Lincoln was assiduous in the cause of his amusement; all that was novel and curious in contemporary invention was brought to him, until at last his appetite for novelty was well-nigh glutted. One might fill a dozen inconsecutive volumes with the strange things they exhibited. Each afternoon he held his court for an hour or so. He speedily found his interest in his contemporaries becoming personal and intimate. At first he had been alert chiefly for unfamiliarity and peculiarity; any floppishness in their dress, any discordance with his preconceptions of nobility in their status and manners had jarred upon him, and it was remarkable to him how soon that strangeness and the faint hostility that arose from it, disappeared; how soon he came to appreciate the true perspective of his position, and see the old Victorian days remote and quaint. He found himself particularly amused by the red-haired daughter of the Manager of the European Piggeries. On the second day after dinner he made the acquaintance of a latter-day dancing girl, and found her an astonishing artist. And after that, more hypnotic wonders. On the third day Lincoln was moved to suggest that the Master should repair to a Pleasure City, but this Graham declined, nor would he accept the services of the hypnotists in his aeronautical experiments. The link of locality held him to London; he found a perpetual wonder in topographical identifications that he would have missed abroad. "Here—or a hundred feet below here," he could say, "I used to eat my midday cutlets during my London University days. Underneath here was Waterloo and the perpetual hunt for confusing trains. Often have I stood waiting down there, bag in hand, and stared up into the sky above the forest of signals, little thinking I should walk some day a hundred yards in the air. And now in that very sky that was once a grey smoke canopy, I circle in an aeropile."

During those three days Graham was so occupied with such distractions that the vast political movements in progress outside his quarters had but a small share of his attention. Those about him told him little. Daily

came Ostrog, the Boss, his Grand Visier, his mayor of the palace, to report in vague terms the steady establishment of his rule; "a little trouble" soon to be settled in this city, "a slight disturbance" in that. The song of the social revolt came to him no more; he never learned that it had been forbidden in the municipal limits; and all the great emotions of the crow's nest slumbered in his mind.

But on the second and third of the three days he found himself, in spite of his interest in the daughter of the Pig Manager, or it may be by reason of the thoughts her conversation suggested, remembering the girl Helen Wotton, who had spoken to him so oddly at the Wind-Vane Keeper's gathering. The impression she had made was a deep one, albeit the incessant surprise of novel circumstances had kept him from brooding upon it for a space. But now her memory was coming to its own. He wondered what she had meant by those broken half-forgotten sentences; the picture of her eyes and the earnest passion of her face became more vivid as his mechanical interests faded. Her beauty came compellingly between him and certain immediate temptations of ignoble passion. But he did not see her again until three full days were past.

CHAPTER XVIII

Graham Remembers

SHE came upon him at last in a little gallery that ran from the Wind-Vane Offices toward his state apartments. The gallery was long and narrow, with a series of recesses, each with an arched fenestration that looked upon a court of palms. He came upon her suddenly in one of these recesses. She was seated. She turned her head at the sound of his footsteps and started at the sight of him. Every touch of color vanished from her face. She rose instantly, made a step toward him as if to address him, and hesitated. He stopped and stood still, expectant. Then he perceived that a nervous tumult silenced her, perceived, too, that she must have sought speech with him to be waiting for him in this place.

He felt a regal impulse to assist her. "I have wanted to see you," he said. "A few days ago you wanted to tell me something—you wanted to tell me of the people. What was it you had to tell me?"

She looked at him with troubled eyes.

"You said the people were unhappy?"

For a moment she was silent still.

"It must have seemed strange to you," she said abruptly

"It did. And yet—"

"It was an impulse."

"Well?"

"That is all."

She looked at him with a face of hesitation. She spoke with an effort. "You forget," she said, drawing a deep breath.

"What?"

"The people—"

"Do you mean—?"

"You forget the people."

He looked interrogative.

"Yes. I know you are surprised. For you do not understand what you are. You do not know the things that are happening."

"Well?"

"You do not understand."

"Not clearly, perhaps. But—tell me."

She turned to him with sudden resolution. "It is so hard to explain. I have meant to, I have wanted to. And now—I cannot. I am not ready with words. But about you—there is something. It is Wonder. Your sleep—your awakening. These things are miracles. To me at least—and to all the common people. You who

lived and suffered and died, you who were a common citizen, wake again, live again, to find yourself Master almost of the earth."

"Master of the earth," he said. "So they tell me. But try and imagine how little I know of it."

"Cities—Trusts—the Labor Company—"

"Principalities, powers, dominions—the power and the glory. Yes, I have heard them shout. I know. I am Master. King, if you wish. With Ostrog, the Boss—"

He paused.

She turned upon him and surveyed his face with a curious scrutiny. "Well?"

He smiled. "To take the responsibility."

"That is what we have begun to fear." For a moment she said no more. "No," she said slowly. "You will take the responsibility. You will take the responsibility. The people look to you."

She spoke softly. "Listen! For at least half the years of your sleep—in every generation—multitudes of people, in every generation greater multitudes of people, have prayed that you might awake—*prayed*."

Graham moved to speak and did not.

She hesitated, and a faint color crept back to her cheek. "Do you know that you have been to myriads—King Arthur, Barbarossa—the King who would come in his own good time and put the world right for them?"

"I suppose the imagination of the people—"

"Have you not heard our proverb, 'When the Sleeper wakes?' While you lay insensible and motionless there—thousands came. Thousands. Every first of the month you lay in state with a white robe upon you and the people filed by you. When I was a little girl I saw you like that, with your face white and calm."

She turned her face from him and looked steadfastly at the painted wall before her. Her voice fell. "When I was a little girl I used to look at your face. . . it seemed to me fixed and waiting, like the patience of God."

"That is what we thought of you," she said. "That is how you seemed to us."

She turned shining eyes to him, her voice was clear and strong. "In the city, in the earth, a myriad myriad men and women are waiting to see what you will do, full of strange incredible expectations."

"Yes?"

"Ostrog—no one—can take that responsibility."

Graham looked at her in surprise, at her face lit with emotion. She seemed at first to have spoken with an effort, and to have fired herself by speaking.

"Do you think," she said, "that you who have lived that little life so far away in the past, you who have fallen into and risen out of this miracle of sleep—do you think that the wonder and reverence and hope of half the world has gathered about you only that you may live another little life? . . . That you may shift the responsibility to any other man?"

"I know how great this kingship of mine is," he said haltingly. "I know how great it seems. But is it real? It is incredible—dreamlike. Is it real, or is it only a great delusion?"

"It is real," she said; "if you dare."

"After all, like all kingship, my kingship is Belief. It is an illusion in the minds of men."

"If you dare!" she said.

"But—"

"Countless men," she said, "and while it is in their minds—they will obey."

"But I know nothing. That is what I had in mind. I know nothing. And these others—the Councillors, Ostrog. They are wiser, cooler, they know so much, every detail. And, indeed, what are these miseries of which you speak? What am I to know? Do you mean—"

He stopped blankly.

"I am still hardly more than a girl," she said. "But to me the world seems full of wretchedness. The world

has altered since your day, altered very strangely. I have prayed that I might see you and tell you these things. The world has changed. As if a canker had seized it—and robbed life of—everything worth having."

SHE turned a flushed face upon him, moving suddenly. "Your days were the days of freedom. Yes—I have thought. I have been made to think, for my life—has not been happy. Men are no longer free—no greater, no better than the men of your time. That is not all. This city—is a prison. Every city now is a prison. Mammon grips the key in his hand. Myriads, countless myriads, toil from the cradle to the grave. Is that right? Is that to be—for ever? Yes, far worse than in your time. All about us, beneath us, sorrow and pain. All the shallow delight of such life as you find about you, is separated by just a little from a life of wretchedness beyond any telling. Yes, the poor know it—they know they suffer. These countless multitudes who faced death for you two nights since—! You owe your life to them."

"Yes," said Graham, slowly. "Yes, I owe my life to them."

"You come," she said, "from the days when this new tyranny of the cities was scarcely beginning. It is a tyranny—a tyranny. In your days the feudal war lords had gone, and the new lordship of wealth had still to come. Half the men in the world still lived out upon the free countryside. The cities had still to devour them. I have heard the stories out of the old books—there was nobility! Common men led lives of love and faithfulness then—they did a thousand things. And you—you come from that time."

"It was not—. But never mind. How is it now—?"

"Gain and the Pleasure Cities! Or slavery—un-thanked, unhonored, slavery."

"Slavery!" he said.

"Slavery."

"You don't mean to say that human beings are chattels."

"Worse. That is what I want you to know, what I want you to see. I know you do not know. They will keep things from you, they will take you presently to a Pleasure City. But you have noticed men and women and children in pale blue canvas, with thin yellow faces and dull eyes?"

"Everywhere."

"Speaking a horrible dialect, coarse and weak."

"I have heard it."

"They are the slaves—your slaves. They are the slaves of the Labor Company you own."

"The Labor Company! In some way—that is familiar. Ah! now I remember. I saw it when I was wandering about the city, after the lights returned, great fronts of buildings colored pale blue. Do you really mean—"

"Yes. How can I explain it to you? Of course the blue uniform struck you. Nearly a third of our people wear it—more assume it now every day. This Labor Company has grown imperceptibly."

"What is this Labor Company?" asked Graham.

"In the old times, how did you manage with starving people?"

"There was the workhouse—which the parishes maintained."

"Workhouse! Yes—there was something. In our history lessons. I remember now. The Labor Company ousted the workhouse. It grew—partly—out of something—you, perhaps, may remember it—an emotional religious organization called the Salvation Army—that became a business company. In the first place it was almost a charity. To save people from workhouse rigors. Now I come to think of it, it was one of the earliest properties your Trustees acquired. They bought the Salvation Army and reconstructed it as this. The idea

in the first place was to give work to starving homeless people."

"Yes."

"Nowadays there are no workhouses, no refuges and charities, nothing but that Company. Its offices are everywhere. That blue is its color. And any man, woman or child who comes to be hungry and weary and with neither home nor friend nor resort, must go to the Company in the end—or seek some way of death. The Euthanasia is beyond their means—for the poor there is no easy death. And at any hour in the day or night there is food, shelter and a blue uniform for all comers—that is the first condition of the Company's incorporation—and in return for a day's shelter the Company extracts a day's work, and then returns the visitor's proper clothing and sends him or her out again."

"Yes?"

"Perhaps that does not seem so terrible to you. In your days men starved in your streets. That was bad. But they died—men. These people in blue—. The proverb runs: 'Blue canvas once and ever.' The Company trades in their labor, and it has taken care to assure itself of the supply. People come to it starving and helpless—they eat and sleep for a night and day, they work for a day, and at the end of the day they go out again. If they have worked well they have a penny or so—enough for a theatre or a cheap dancing place, or a kinematograph story, or a dinner or a bet. They wander about after that is spent. Begging is prevented by the police of the ways. Besides, no one gives. They come back again the next day or the day after—brought back by the same incapacity that brought them first. At last their proper clothing wears out, or their rags get so shabby that they are ashamed. Then they must work for months to get fresh. If they want fresh. A great number of children are born under the Company's care. The mother owes them a month thereafter—the children they cherish and educate until they are fourteen, and they pay two years' service. You may be sure these children are educated for the blue canvas. And so it is the Company works."

"And none are destitute in the city?"

"None. They are either in blue canvas or in prison."

"If they will not work?"

"Most people will work at that pitch, and the Company has powers. There are stages of unpleasantness in the work—stoppage of food—and a man or woman who has refused to work once is known by a thumb-marking system in the Company's offices all over the world. Besides, who can leave the city poor? To go to Paris costs two Lions. And for insubordination there are the prisons—dark and miserable—out of sight below. There are prisons now for many things."

"And a third of the people wear this blue canvas?"

"More than a third. Toilers, living without pride or delight and hope, with the stories of Pleasure Cities ringing in their ears, mocking their shameful lives, their privations and hardships. Too poor even for the Euthanasia, the rich man's refuge from life. Dumb, crippled millions, countless millions, all the world about, ignorant of anything but limitations and unsatisfied desires. They are born, they are thwarted and they die. That is the state to which we have come."

For a space Graham sat downcast.

"But there has been a revolution," he said. "All these things will be changed. 'Ostrog—'"

"That is our hope. That is the hope of the world. But Ostrog will not do it. He is a politician. To him it seems things must be like this. He does not mind. He takes it for granted. All the rich, all the influential, all who are happy, come at last to take these miseries for granted. They use the people in their politics,

they live in ease by their degradation. But you—you who come from a happier age—it is to you the people look. To you."

He looked at her face. Her eyes were bright with unshed tears. He felt a rush of emotion. For a moment he forgot this city, he forgot the race, and all those vague remote voices, in the immediate humanity of her beauty.

"But what am I to do?" he said with his eyes upon her.

"Rule," she answered, bending towards him and speaking in a low tone. "Rule the world as it has never been ruled, for the good and happiness of men. For you might rule it—you could rule it."

"The people are stirring. All over the world the people are stirring. It wants but a word—but a word from you—to bring them all together. Even the middle sort of people are restless—unhappy."

"They are not telling you the things that are happening. The people will not go back to their drudgery—they refuse to be disarmed. Ostrog has awakened something greater than he dreamt of—he has awakened hopes."

His heart was beating fast. He tried to seem judicial, to weigh considerations.

"They only want their leader," she said.

"And then?"

"You could do what you would;—the world is yours."

He sat, no longer regarding her. Presently he spoke. "The old dreams, and the thing I have dreamt, liberty, happiness. Are they dreams? Could one man—one man—?" His voice sank and ceased.

"Not one man, but all men—give them only a leader to speak the desire of their hearts."

He shook his head, and for a time there was silence.

He looked up suddenly, and their eyes met. "I have not your faith," he said. "I have not your youth. I am here with power that mocks me. No—let me speak. I want to do—not right—I have not the strength for that—but something rather right than wrong. It will bring no millenium, but I am resolved now that I will rule. What you have said has awakened me. . . . You are right. Ostrog must know his place. And I will learn—. . . One thing I promise you. This Labor slavery shall end."

"And you will rule?"

"Yes. Provided—. There is one thing."

"Yes?"

"That you will help me."

"I!—a girl!"

"Yes. Does it not occur to you I am absolutely alone?"

She started and for an instant her eyes had pity. "Need you ask whether I will help you?" she said.

She stood before him, beautiful, worshipful, and her enthusiasm and the greatness of their theme was like a great gulf fixed between them. To touch her, to clasp her hand, was a thing beyond hope. "Then I will rule indeed," he said slowly. "I will rule—" He paused. "With you."

There came a tense silence, and then the beating of a clock striking the hour. She made him no answer. Graham rose.

"Even now," he said, "Ostrog will be waiting." He hesitated, facing her. "When I have asked him certain questions—. There is much I do not know. It may be that I will go to see with my own eyes the things of which you have spoken. And when I return—?"

"I shall know of your going and coming. I will wait for you here again."

He stood for a moment regarding her.

"I knew," she said, and stopped.

He waited, but she said no more. They regarded one another steadfastly, questioningly, and then he turned from her towards the Wind-Vane office.



A realistic crucifixion. 1

CHAPTER XIX

Ostrog's Point of View

GRAHAM found Ostrog waiting to give a formal account of his day's stewardship. On previous occasions he had passed over this ceremony as speedily as possible, in order to resume his aerial experiences, but now he began to ask quick short questions. He was very anxious to take up his empire forthwith. Ostrog brought flattering reports of the development of affairs abroad. In Paris and Berlin, Graham perceived that he was saying, there had been trouble, not organized resistance indeed, but insubordinate proceedings. "After all these years," said Ostrog, when Graham pressed inquiries; "the Commune has lifted its head again. That is the real nature of the struggle, to be explicit." But order had been restored in these cities. Graham, the more deliberately judicial for the stirring emotions he felt, asked if there had been any fighting. "A little," said Ostrog. "In one quarter only. But the Senegalese division of our African agricultural police—the Consolidated African Companies have a very well drilled police—was ready, and so were the aeroplanes. We expected a little trouble in the continental cities, and in America.

But things are very quiet in America. They are satisfied with the overthrow of the Council. For the time."

"Why should you expect trouble?" asked Graham abruptly.

"There is a lot of discontent—social discontent."

"The Labor Company?"

"You are learning," said Ostrog with a touch of surprise. "Yes. It is chiefly the discontent with the Labor Company. It was that discontent supplied the motive force of this overthrow—that and your awakening."

"Yes?"

Ostrog smiled. He became explicit. "We had to stir up their discontent, we had to revive the old ideals of universal happiness—all men equal—all men happy—no luxury that everyone may not share—ideas that have slumbered for two hundred years. You know that? We had to revive these ideals, impossible as they are—in order to overthrow the Council. And now—"

"Well?"

"Our revolution is accomplished, and the Council is overthrown, and people whom we have stirred up—remain surging. There was scarcely enough fighting . . . We made promises, of course. It is extraordinary how violently and rapidly this vague out-of-date humanitarianism has revived and spread. We who sowed the seed

even, have been astonished. In Paris, as I say—we have had to call in a little external help.”

“And here?”

“There is trouble. Multitudes will not go back to work. There is a general strike. Half the factories are empty and the people are swarming in the Ways. They are talking of a Commune. Men in silk and satin have been insulted in the streets. The blue canvas is expecting all sorts of things from you. . . . Of course there is no need for you to trouble. We are setting the Babble Machines to work with counter suggestions in the cause of law and order. We must keep the grip tight; that is all.”

Graham thought. He perceived a way of asserting himself. But he spoke with restraint.

“Even to the pitch of bringing a negro police,” he said.

“They are useful,” said Ostrog. “They are fine loyal brutes, with no wash of ideas in their heads—such as our rabble has. The Council should have had them as police of the Ways, and things might have been different. Of course, there is nothing to fear except rioting and wreckage. You can manage your own wings now, and you can soar away to Capri if there is any smoke or fuss. We have the pull of all the great things; the aeronauts are privileged and rich, the closest trades union in the world, and so are the engineers of the wind vanes. We have the air, and the mastery of the air is the mastery of the earth. No one of any ability is organizing against us. They have no leaders—only the sectional leaders of the secret society we organized before your very opportunity awakening. Mere busybodies and sentimentalists they are and bitterly jealous of each other. None of them is man enough for a central figure. The only trouble will be a disorganized upheaval. To be frank—that may happen. But it won’t interrupt your aeronautics. The days when the People could make revolutions are past.”

“I suppose they are,” said Graham. “I suppose they are.” He mused. “This world of yours has been full of surprises to me. In the old days we dreamt of a wonderful democratic life, of a time when all men would be equal and happy.”

Ostrog looked at him steadfastly. “The day of democracy is past,” he said. “Past for ever. That day began with the bowmen of Crecy, it ended when marching infantry, when common men in masses ceased to win the battles of the world, when costly cannon, great iron-clads, and strategic railways became the means of power. Today is the day of wealth. Wealth now is power as it never was power before—it commands earth and sea and sky. All power is for those who can handle wealth. . . . You must accept facts, and these are facts. The world for the Crowd! The Crowd as Ruler! Even in your days that creed has been tried and condemned. Today it has only one believer—a multiplex, silly one—the man in the Crowd.”

Graham did not answer immediately. He stood lost in sombre preoccupations.

“No,” said Ostrog. “The day of the common man is past. On the open countryside one man is as good as another, or nearly as good. The earlier aristocracy had a precarious tenure of strength and audacity. They were tempered—tempered. There were insurrections, duels, riots. The first real aristocracy, the first permanent aristocracy, came in with castles and armor, and vanished before the musket and bow. But this is the second aristocracy. The real one. Those days of gun-powder and democracy were only an eddy in the stream. The common man now is a helpless unit. In these days we have this great machine of the city, and an organization complex beyond his understanding.”

“Yet,” said Graham, “there is something resists, something you are holding down—something that stirs and presses.”

“You will see,” said Ostrog, with a forced smile that would brush these difficult questions aside. “I have not roused the force to destroy myself—trust me.”

“I wonder,” said Graham.

Ostrog stared.

“Must the world go this way?” said Graham, with his emotions at the speaking point. “Must it indeed go in this way? Have all our hopes been vain?”

“What do you mean?” said Ostrog. “Hopes?”

“I came from a democratic age. And I find an aristocratic tyranny!”

“Well,—but you are the chief tyrant.”

Graham shook his head.

“Well,” said Ostrog, “take the general question. It is the way that change has always travelled. Aristocracy, the prevalence of the best—the suffering and extinction of the unfit, and so to better things.”

“But aristocracy! those people I met—”

“Oh! not *those*!” said Ostrog. “But for the most part they go to their death. Vice and pleasure! They have no children. That sort of stuff will die out. If the world keeps to one road, that is, if there is no turning back. An easy road to excess, convenient Euthanasia for the pleasure seekers singed in the flame, that is the way to improve the race!”

“Pleasant extinction,” said Graham. “Yet—.” He thought for an instant. “There is that other thing—the Crowd, the great mass of poor men. Will that die out? That will not die out. And it suffers, its suffering is a force that even you—”

Ostrog moved impatiently, and when he spoke, he spoke rather less evenly than before.

“Don’t you trouble about these things,” he said. “Everything will be settled in a few days now. The Crowd is a huge foolish beast. What if it does not die out? Even if it does not die, it can still be tamed and driven. I have no sympathy with servile men. You heard those people shouting and singing two nights ago. They were taught that song. If you had taken any man there in cold blood and asked why he shouted, he could not have told you. They think they are shouting for you, that they are loyal and devoted to you. Just then they were ready to slaughter the Council. Today—they are already murmuring against those who have overthrown the Council.”

“No, no,” said Graham. “They shouted because their lives were dreary, without joy or pride, and because in me—in me—they hoped.”

“And what was their hope? What is their hope? What right have they to hope? They work ill and they want the reward of those who work well. The hope of mankind—what is it? That some day the Over-man may come, that some day the inferior, the weak and the bestial may be subdued or eliminated. Subdued if not eliminated. The world is no place for the bad, the stupid, the enervated. Their duty—it’s a fine duty too!—is to die. The death of the failure! That is the path by which the beast rose to manhood, by which man goes on to higher things.”

Ostrog took a pace, seemed to think, and turned on Graham. “I can imagine how this great world state of ours seems to a Victorian Englishman. You regret all the old forms of representative government—their spectres still haunt the world, the voting councils and parliaments and all that eighteenth century tomfoolery. You feel moved against our Pleasure Cities. I might have thought of that,—had I not been busy. But you will learn better. The people are mad with envy—they would be in sympathy with you. Even in the streets now, they clamor to destroy the Pleasure Cities. But the Pleasure Cities are the excretory organs of the State, attractive places that year after year draw together all that is weak and vicious, all that is lascivious and lazy,

all the easy roguery of the world, to a graceful destruction. They go there, they have their time, they die childless, all the pretty silly lascivious women die childless, and mankind is the better. If the people were sane they would not envy the rich their way of death. And you would emancipate the silly brainless workers that we have enslaved, and try to make their lives easy and pleasant again. Just as they have sunk to what they are fit for." He smiled a smile that irritated Graham oddly. "You will learn better. I know those ideas; in my boyhood I read your Shelley and dreamt of Liberty. There is no liberty, save wisdom and self-control. Liberty is within—not without. It is each man's own affair. Suppose—which is impossible—that these swarming yelping fools in blue get the upper hand of us, what then? They will only fall to other masters. So long as there are sheep Nature will insist on beasts of prey. It would mean but a few hundred years' delay. The coming of the aristocrat is fatal and assured. The end will be the Over-man—for all the mad protests of humanity. Let them revolt, let them win and kill me and my like. Others will arise—other masters. The end will be the same."

"I wonder," said Graham doggedly.

For a moment he stood downcast.

"But I must see these things for myself," he said, suddenly assuming a tone of confident mastery. "Only by seeing can I understand. I must learn. That is what I want to tell you, Ostrog. I do not want to be King in a Pleasure City; that is not my pleasure. I have spent enough time with aeronautics—and those other things. I must learn how people live now, how the common life has developed. Then I shall understand these things better. I must learn how common people live—the labor people more especially—how they work, marry, bear children, die—"

"You get that from our realistic novelists," suggested Ostrog, suddenly preoccupied.

"I want reality," said Graham, "not realism."

"There are difficulties," said Ostrog, and thought. "On the whole perhaps—"

"I did not expect—"

"I had thought—. And yet, perhaps—. You say you want to go through the Ways of the city and see the common people."

Suddenly he came to some conclusion. "You would need to go disguised," he said. "The city is intensely excited, and the discovery of your presence among them might create a fearful tumult. Still this wish of yours to go into this city—this idea of yours—. Yes, now I think the thing over it seems to me not altogether—. It can be contrived. If you would really find an interest in that! You are, of course, Master. You can go soon if you like. A disguise for this excursion Asano will be able to manage. He would go with you. After all it is not a bad idea of yours."

"You will not want to consult me in any matter?" asked Graham suddenly, struck by an odd suspicion.

"Oh, dear no! No! I think you may trust affairs to me for a time, at any rate," said Ostrog, smiling. "Even if we differ—"

Graham glanced at him sharply.

"There is no fighting likely to happen soon?" he asked abruptly.

"Certainly not."

"I have been thinking about these negroes. I don't believe the people intend any hostility to me, and, after all, I am the Master. I do not want any negroes brought to London. It is an archaic prejudice perhaps, but I have peculiar feelings about Europeans and the subject races. Even about Paris—"

Ostrog stood watching him from under his drooping brows. "I am not bringing negroes to London," he said slowly. "But if—"

"You are not to bring armed negroes to London, what-

ever happens," said Graham. "In that matter I am quite decided."

Ostrog, after a pause, decided not to speak, and bowed deferentially.

CHAPTER XX

In the City Ways

AND that night, unknown and unsuspected, Graham, dressed in the costume of an inferior wind-vane official keeping holiday, and accompanied by Asano in Labor Company canvas, surveyed the city through which he had wandered when it was veiled in darkness. But now he saw it lit and waking, a whirlpool of life. In spite of the surging and swaying of the forces of revolution, in spite of the unusual discontent, the mutterings of the greater struggle of which the first revolt was but the prelude, the myriad streams of commerce still flowed wide and strong. He knew now something of the dimensions and quality of the new age, but he was not prepared for the infinite surprise of the detailed view, for the torrent of color and vivid impressions that poured past him.

This was his first real contact with the people of these latter days. He realized that all that had gone before, saving his glimpses of the public theatres and markets, had had its element of seclusion, had been a movement within the comparatively narrow political quarter, that all his previous experiences had revolved immediately about the question of his own position. But here was the city at the busiest hours of night, the people to a large extent returned to their own immediate interests, the resumption of the real informal life, the common habits of the new time.

They emerged at first into a street whose opposite ways were crowded with the blue canvas liveries. This swarm Graham saw was a portion of a procession—it was odd to see a procession parading the city *seated*. They carried banners of coarse red stuff with red letters. "No disarmament," said the banners, for the most part in crudely daubed letters and with variant spelling, and "Why should we disarm?" "No disarming." "No disarming." Banner after banner went by, a stream of banners flowing past, and at last at the end, the song of the revolt and a noisy band of strange instruments. "They all ought to be at work," said Asano. "They have had no food these two days, or they have stolen it."

Presently Asano made a detour to avoid the congested crowd that gaped upon the occasional passage of dead bodies from hospital to a mortuary, the gleanings after death's harvest of the first revolt.

That night few people were sleeping, everyone was abroad. A vast excitement, perpetual crowds perpetually changing, surrounded Graham; his mind was confused and darkened by an incessant tumult, by the cries and enigmatical fragments of the social struggle that was as yet only beginning. Everywhere festoons and banners of black and strange decorations, intensified the quality of his popularity. Everywhere he caught snatches of that crude thick dialect that served the illiterate class, the class, that is, beyond the reach of phonograph culture, in their common-place intercourse. Everywhere this trouble of disarmament was in the air, with a quality of immediate stress of which he had no inkling during his seclusion in the Wind-Vane quarter. He perceived that as soon as he returned he must discuss this with Ostrog, this and the greater issues of which it was the expression, in a far more conclusive way than he had so far done. Perpetually that night, even in the earlier hours of their wanderings about the city, the spirit of unrest and revolt swamped his attention, to the exclusion of countless strange things he might otherwise have observed.

This preoccupation made his impressions fragmentary.

Yet amidst so much that was strange and vivid, no subject, however personal and insistent, could exert undivided sway. There were spaces when the revolutionary movement passed clean out of his mind, was drawn aside like a curtain from before some startling new aspect of the time. Helen had swayed his mind to this intense earnestness of inquiry, but there came times when she, even, receded beyond his conscious thoughts. At one moment, for example, he found they were traversing the religious quarter, for the easy transit about the city afforded by the moving ways rendered sporadic churches and chapels no longer necessary—and his attention was vividly arrested by the facade of one of the Christian sects.

They were traveling seated on one of the swift upper ways, the place leapt upon them at a bend and advanced rapidly towards them. It was covered with inscriptions from top to base, in vivid white and blue, save where a vast and glaring cinematograph transparency presented a realistic New Testament scene, and where a vast festoon of black to show that the popular religion followed the popular politics, hung across the lettering. Graham had already become familiar with the phonotype writing and these inscriptions arrested him, being to his sense for the most part almost incredible blasphemy. Among the less offensive were: "Salvation on the First Floor and turn to the Right." "Put your Money on your Maker." "The Sharpest Conversion in London, Expert Operators! Look Slippery!" "What Christ would say to the Sleeper;—Join the Up-to-date Saints!" "Be a Christian—without hindrance to your present Occupation." "All the Brightest Bishops on the Bench to-night and Prices as Usual." "Brisk Blessings for Busy Business Men."

"But this is appalling!" said Graham, as that deafening scream of mercantile piety towered above them.

"What is appalling?" asked his little officer, apparently seeking vainly for anything unusual in this shrieking enamel.

"This! Surely the essence of religion is reverence."

"Oh that!" Asano looked at Graham. "Does it shock you?" he said in the tone of one who makes a discovery. "I suppose it would, of course. I had forgotten. Nowadays the competition for attention is so keen, and people simply haven't the leisure to attend to their souls, you know, as they used to do." He smiled. "In the old days you had quiet Sabbaths and the countryside. Though somewhere I've read of Sunday afternoons that—"

"But, that," said Graham glancing back at the receding blue and white. "That is surely not the only—"

"There are hundreds of different ways. But, of course, if a sect doesn't tell it doesn't pay. Worship has moved with the times. There are high class sects with quieter ways—costly incense and personal attentions and all that. These people are extremely popular and prosperous. They pay several dozen lions for those apartments to the Council—to you, I should say."

Graham still felt a difficulty with the coinage, and this mention of a dozen lions brought him abruptly to that matter. In a moment the screaming temples and their swarming touts were forgotten in this new interest. A turn of a phrase suggested, and an answer confirmed the idea that gold and silver were both demonetized, that stamped gold which had begun its reign amidst the merchants of Phoenicia was at last dethroned. The change had been graduated but swift, brought about by an extension of the system of cheques that had even in his previous life already practically superseded gold in all the larger business transactions. The common traffic of the city, the common currency indeed of all the world, was conducted by means of the little brown, green and pink council cheques for small amounts, printed with a blank payee. Asano had several with him, and at the first opportunity he supplied the gaps in his set. They were

printed not on tearable paper, but on a semi-transparent fabric of silken flexibility, interwoven with silk. Across them all sprawled a fac-simile of Graham's signature, his first encounter with the curves and turns of that familiar autograph for two hundred and three years.

SOME intermediary experiences made no impression sufficiently vivid to prevent the matter of the disarmament claiming his thoughts again; a blurred picture of a Theosophist temple that promised MIRACLES in enormous letters of unsteady fire was least submerged perhaps, but then came the view of the dining hall in Northumberland Avenue. That interested him very greatly.

By the energy and thought of Asano he was able to view this place from a little screened gallery reserved for the attendants of the tables. The building was pervaded by a distant muffled hooting, piping and bawling, of which he did not at first understand the import, but which recalled a certain mysterious leathery voice he had heard after the resumption of the lights on the night of his solitary wandering.

He had grown accustomed now to vastness and great numbers of people, nevertheless this spectacle held him for a long time. It was as he watched the table service more immediately beneath, and interspersed with many questions and answers concerning details, that the realization of the full significance of the feast of several thousand people came to him.

It was his constant surprise to find that points that one might have expected to strike vividly at the very outset never occurred to him until some trivial detail suddenly shaped as a riddle and pointed to the obvious thing he had overlooked. In this matter, for instance, it had not occurred to him that this continuity of the city, this exclusion of weather, these vast halls and ways, involved the disappearance of the household; that the typical Victorian "Home," the little brick cell containing kitchen and scullery, living rooms and bedrooms, had, save for the ruins that diversified the countryside, vanished as surely as the wattle hut. But now he saw what had indeed been manifest from the first, that London, regarded as a living place, was no longer an aggregation of houses but a prodigious hotel, an hotel with a thousand classes of accommodation, thousands of dining halls, chapels, theatres, markets and places of assembly, a synthesis of enterprises, of which he chiefly was the owner. People had their sleeping rooms, with, it might be, ante-chambers, rooms that were always sanitary at least whatever the degree of comfort and privacy, and for the rest they lived much as many people had lived in the new-made giant hotels of the Victorian days, eating, reading, thinking, playing, conversing, all in places of public resort, going to their work in the industrial quarters of the city or doing business in their offices in the trading section.

He perceived at once how necessarily this state of affairs had developed from the Victorian city. The fundamental reason for the modern city had ever been the economy of co-operation. The chief thing to prevent the merging of the separate households in his own generation was simply the still imperfect civilization of the people, the strong barbaric pride, passions, and prejudices, the jealousies, rivalries, and violence of the middle and lower classes, which had necessitated the entire separation of contiguous households. But the change, the taming of the people, had been in rapid progress even then. In his brief thirty years of previous life he had seen an enormous extension of the habit of consuming meals from home, the casually patronized horse-box coffee-house had given place to the open and crowded Aerated Bread Shop for instance, women's clubs had had their beginning, and an immense development of reading rooms, lounges and libraries had witnessed to the growth

of social confidence. These promises had by this time attained to their complete fulfilment. The locked and barred household had passed away.

These people below him belonged, he learnt, to the lower middle class, the class just above the blue laborers, a class so accustomed in the Victorian period to feed with every precaution of privacy that its members, when occasion confronted them with a public meal, would usually hide their embarrassment under horseplay or a markedly militant demeanor. But these gaily, or lightly dressed people below, albeit vivacious, hurried and uncommunicative, were dexterously mannered and certainly quite at their ease with regard to one another.

He noted a slight significant thing; the table, as far as he could see, was and remained delightfully neat, there was nothing to parallel the confusion, the broadcast crumbs, the splashes of viand and condiment, the overturned drink and displaced ornaments, which would have marked the stormy progress of the Victorian meal. The table furniture was very different. There were no ornaments, no flowers, and the table was without a cloth, being made, he learnt, of a solid substance having the texture and appearance of damask. He discerned that this damask substance was patterned with gracefully designed trade advertisements.

In a sort of recess before each diner was a complex apparatus of porcelain and metal. There was one plate of white porcelain, and by means of taps for hot and cold volatile fluids the diner washed this himself between the courses; he also washed his elegant white metal knife and fork and spoon as occasion required.

Soup and the chemical wine that was the common drink were delivered by similar taps, and the remaining covers traveled automatically in tastefully arranged dishes down the table along silver rails. The diner stopped these and helped himself at his discretion. They appeared at a little door at one end of the table, and vanished at the other. That turn of democratic sentiment in decay, that ugly pride of menial souls, which renders equals loth to wait on one another, was very strong he found among these people. He was so preoccupied with these details that it was only just as he was leaving the place that he remarked the huge advertisement dioramas that marched majestically along the upper walls and proclaimed the most remarkable commodities.

Beyond this place they came into a crowded hall, and he discovered the cause of the noise that had perplexed him. They paused at a turnstile at which a payment was made.

Graham's attention was immediately arrested by a violent, loud hoot, followed by a vast leathery voice. "The Master is sleeping peacefully," it vociferated. "He is in excellent health. He is going to devote the rest of his life to aeronautics. He says women are more beautiful than ever. Galloop! Wow! Our wonderful civilization astonishes him beyond measure. Beyond all measure. Galloop. He puts great trust in Boss Ostrog, absolute confidence in Boss Ostrog. Ostrog is to be his chief minister; is authorized to remove or reinstate public officers—all patronage will be in his hands. All patronage in the hands of Boss Ostrog! The Councillors have been sent back to their own prison above the Council House."

Graham stopped at the first sentence, and, looking up, beheld a foolish trumpet face from which this was brayed. This was the General Intelligence Machine. For a space it seemed to be gathering breath, and a regular throbbing from its cylindrical body was audible. Then it trumpeted "Galloop, Galloop," and broke out again.

"Paris is now pacified. All resistance is over. Galloop! The black police hold every position of importance in the city. They fought with great bravery, singing songs written in praise of their ancestors by the poet Kipling. Once or twice they got out of hand, and tortured and mutilated wounded and captured insurgents, men and

women. Moral—don't go rebelling. Haha! Galloop, Galloop! They are lively fellows. Lively brave fellows. Let this be a lesson to the disorderly banderlog of this city. Yaha! Banderlog! Filth of the earth! Galloop, Galloop!"

The voice ceased. There was a confused murmur of disapproval among the crowd. "Damned niggers." A man began to harangue near them. "Is this the Master's doing, brothers? Is this the Master's doing?"

"Black police!" said Graham. "What is that? You don't mean—"

Asano touched his arm and gave him a warning look, and forthwith another of these mechanisms screaming deafeningly and gave tongue in a shrill voice. "Yahaha, Yaha, Yap! Hear a live paper yelp! Live paper. Yaha! Shocking outrage in Paris. Yahahaha! The Parisians exasperated by the black police to the pitch of assassination. Dreadful reprisals. Savage times come again. Blood! Blood! Yaha!" The nearer Babble Machine hooted stupendously, "Galloop, Galloop," drowned the end of the sentence, and proceeded in a rather flatter note than before with novel comments on the horrors of disorder. "Law and order must be maintained," said the nearer Babble Machine.

"But," began Graham.

"Don't ask questions here," said Asano, "or you will be involved in an argument."

"Then let us go on," said Graham, "for I want to know more of this."

AS he and his companion pushed their way through the excited crowd that swarmed beneath these voices, toward the exit, Graham conceived more clearly the proportion and features of this room. Altogether, great and small, there must have been nearly a thousand of these erections, piping, hooting, bawling and gabbling in that great space, each with its crowd of excited listeners, the majority of them men dressed in blue canvas. There were all sizes of machines, from the little gossiping mechanisms that chuckled out mechanical sarcasm in odd corners, through a number of grades to such fifty-foot giants as that which had first hooted over Graham.

This place was unusually crowded, because of the intense public interest in the course of affairs in Paris. Evidently the struggle had been much more savage than Ostrog had represented it. All the mechanisms were discoursing upon that topic, and the repetition of the people made the huge hive buzz with such phrases as "Lynched policemen," "Women burnt alive," "Fuzzy Wuzzy." "But does the Master allow such things?" asked a man near him. "Is *this* the beginning of the Master's rule?"

Is *this* the beginning of the Master's rule? For a long time after he had left the place, the hooting, whistling and braying of the machines pursued him: "Galloop, Galloop," "Yahahaha, Yaha, Yap! Yaha!" Is *this* the beginning of the Master's rule?

Directly they were out upon the ways he began to question Asano closely on the nature of the Parisian struggle. "This disarmament! What was their trouble? What does it all mean?" Asano seemed chiefly anxious to reassure him that it was "all right." "But these outrages!" "You cannot have an omelet," said Asano, "without breaking eggs. It is only the rough people. Only in one part of the city. All the rest is all right. The Parisian laborers are the wildest in the world, except ours."

"What! the Londoners?"

"No, the Japanese. They have to be kept in order."

"But burning women alive!"

"A Commune!" said Asano. "They would rob you of your property. They would do away with property and give the world over to mob rule. You are Master,

the world is yours. But there will be no Commune here. There is no need for black police here.

"And every consideration has been shown. It is their own negroes—French speaking negroes. Senegal regiments, and Niger and Timbuctoo."

"Regiments?" said Graham, "I thought there was only one—"

"No," said Asano, and glanced at him. "There is more than one."

Graham felt unpleasantly helpless.

"I did not think," he began and stopped abruptly. He went off at a tangent to ask for information about these Babble Machines. For the most part, the crowd present had been shabbily or even raggedly dressed, and Graham learnt that so far as the more prosperous classes were concerned, in all the more comfortable private apartments of the city were fixed Babble Machines that would speak directly a lever was pulled. The tenant of the apartment could connect this with the cables of any of the great News Syndicates that he preferred. When he learnt this presently, he demanded the reason of their absence from his own suite of apartments. Asano stared. "I never thought," he said. "Ostrog must have had them removed."

Graham started. "How was I to know?" he exclaimed.

"Perhaps he thought they would annoy you," said Asano.

"They must be replaced directly I return," said Graham after an interval.

He found a difficulty in understanding that this news room and the dining hall were not great central places, that such establishments were repeated almost beyond counting all over the city. But ever and again during the night's expedition his ears, in some new quarter would pick out from the tumult of the ways the peculiar hooting of the organ of Boss Ostrog, "Galloop, Galloop!" or the shrill "Yahaha, Yaha, Yap!—Hear a live paper yelp!" of its chief rival.

Repeated, too, everywhere, were such *creches* as the one he now entered. It was reached by a lift, and by a glass bridge that flung across the dining hall and traversed the ways at a slight upward angle. To enter the first section of the place necessitated the use of his solvent signature under Asano's direction. They were immediately attended to by a man in a violet robe and gold clasp, the insignia of practising medical men. He perceived from this man's manner that his identity was known, and proceeded to ask questions on the strange arrangements of the place without reserve.

On either side of the passage, which was silent and



The general intelligence machine.

padded, as if to deaden the footfall, were narrow little doors, their size and arrangement suggestive of the cells of a Victorian prison. But the upper portion of each door was of the same greenish transparent stuff that had enclosed him at his awakening, and within, dimly seen, lay, in every case, a very young baby in a little nest of wadding. Elaborate apparatus watched the atmosphere and rang a bell far away in the central office at the slightest departure from the optimum of temperature and moisture. A system of such *creches* had almost entirely replaced the hazardous adventures of the old-world nursing. The attendant presently called Graham's attention to the wet nurses, a vista of mechanical figures, with arms, shoulders and breasts of astonishingly realistic modeling, articulation, and texture, but mere brass tripods below, and having in place of features a flat disc bearing advertisements likely to be of interest to mothers.

Of all the strange things that Graham came upon that night, none jarred more upon his habits of thought than this place. The spectacle of the little pink creatures, their feeble limbs swaying uncertainly in vague first movements, left alone, without embrace or endearment, was wholly repugnant to him. The attendant doctor was of a different opinion. His statistical evidence showed beyond dispute that in the Victorian times, the most dangerous passage of life was the arms of the mother, that there human mortality had ever been most terrible. On the other hand this creche company, the International Creche Syndicate, lost not one-half per cent of the million babies or so that formed its peculiar care. But Graham's prejudice was too strong even for those figures.

Along one of the many passages of the place they presently came upon a young couple in the usual blue canvas peering through the transparency and laughing hysterically at the bald head of their first-born. Graham's face must have showed his estimate of them for their merriment ceased and they looked abashed. But this little incident accentuated his sudden realization of the gulf between his habits of thought and the ways of the new age. He passed on to the crawling rooms and the Kindergarten, perplexed and distressed. He found the endless long playrooms were empty! the latter-day children at least still spent their nights in sleep. As they went through these, the little officer pointed out the nature of the toys, developments of those devised by that inspired sentimentalist Froebel. There were nurses here, but much was done by machines that sang and danced and dangled.

Graham was still not clear upon many points. "But so many orphans," he said perplexed, reverting to a first misconception, and learnt again that they were not orphans.

So soon as they had left the *creche* he began to speak of the horror the babies in their incubating cases had caused him. "Is motherhood gone?" he said. "Was it a cant? Surely it was an instinct. This seems so unnatural—abominable almost."

"Along here we shall come to the dancing place," said Asano by way of reply. "It is sure to be crowded. In spite of all the political unrest it will be crowded. The women take no great interest in politics—except a few here and there. You will see the mothers—most young women in London are mothers. In that class it is considered a creditable thing to have one child—a proof of animation. Few middle class people have more than one. With the Labor Company it is different. As for motherhood! They still take an immense pride in the children. They come here to look at them quite often."

"Then do you mean that the population of the world—?"

"Is falling? Yes. Except among the people under the Labor Company. They are reckless—"

The air was suddenly dancing with music, and down a way they approached obliquely, set with gorgeous pil-

lars as it seemed of clear amethyst, flowed a concourse of gay people and a tumult of merry cries and laughter. He saw curled heads, wreathed brows, and a happy intricate flutter of gamboge pass triumphant across the picture.

"You will see," said Asano with a faint smile. "The world has changed. In a moment you will see the mothers of the new age. Come this way. We shall see those yonder again very soon."

They ascended a certain height in a swift lift, and changed to a slower one. As they went on the music grew upon them, until it was near and full and splendid, and, moving with its glorious intricacies they could distinguish the beat of innumerable dancing feet. They made a payment at a turnstile, and emerged upon the wide gallery that overlooked the dancing place, and upon the full enchantment of sound and sight.

"Here," said Asano, "are the fathers and mothers of the little ones you saw."

The hall was not so richly decorated as that of the Atlas, but saving that, it was, for its size, the most splendid Graham had seen. The beautiful white-limbed figures that supported the galleries reminded him once more of the restored magnificence of sculpture; they seemed to writhe in engaging attitudes, their faces laughed. The source of the music that filled the place was hidden, and the whole vast shining floor was thick with dancing couples. "Look at them," said the little officer, "see how much they show of motherhood."

THE gallery they stood upon ran along the upper edge of a huge screen that cut the dancing hall on the side from a sort of outer hall that showed through broad arches the incessant onward rush of the city ways. In this outer hall was a great crowd of less brilliantly dressed people, as numerous almost as those who danced within, the great majority wearing the blue uniform of the Labor Company that was now so familiar to Graham. Too poor to pass the turnstiles to the festival, they were yet unable to keep away from the sound of its seductions. Some of them even had cleared spaces, and were dancing also, fluttering their rags in the air. Some shouted as they danced, jests and odd allusions Graham did not understand. Once someone began whistling the refrain of the revolutionary song, but it seemed as though that beginning was promptly suppressed. The corner was dark and Graham could not see. He turned to the hall again. Above the caryatidæ were marble busts of men whom that age esteemed great moral emancipators and pioneers; for the most part their names were strange to Graham, though he recognized Grant Allen, Le Gallienne, Nietzsche, Shelley and Goodwin. Great black festoons and eloquent sentiments reinforced the huge inscription that partially defaced the upper end of the dancing place, and asserted that "The Festival of the Awakening" was in progress.

"Myriads are taking holiday or staying from work because of that, quite apart from the laborers who refuse to go back," said Asano. "These people are always ready for holidays."

Graham walked to the parapet and stood leaning over, looking down at the dancers. Save for two or three remote whispering couples, who had stolen apart, he and his guide had the gallery to themselves. A warm breath of scent and vitality came up to him. Both men and women below were lightly clad, bare-armed, open-necked, as the universal warmth of the city permitted. The hair of the men was often a mass of effeminate curls, their chins were always shaven, and many of them had flushed or colored cheeks. Many of the women were very pretty, and all were dressed with elaborate coquetry. As they swept by beneath, he saw ecstatic faces with eyes half closed in pleasure.

"What sort of people are these?" he asked abruptly.

"Workers—prosperous workers. What you would have called the middle class. Independent tradesmen with little separate businesses have vanished long ago, but there are store servers, managers, engineers of a hundred sorts. Tonight is a holiday of course, and every dancing place in the city will be crowded, and every place of worship."

"But—the women?"

"The same. There's a thousand forms of work for women now. But you had the beginning of the independent working-woman in your days. Most women are independent now. Most of these are married more or less—there are a number of methods of contract—and that gives them more money, and enables them to enjoy themselves."

"I see," said Graham looking at the flushed faces, the flash and swirl of movement, and still thinking of that nightmare of pink helpless limbs. "And these are—mothers."

"Most of them."

"The more I see of these things the more complex I find your problems. This, for instance, is a surprise. That news from Paris was a surprise."

In a little while he spoke again:

"These are mothers. Presently, I suppose, I shall get into the modern way of seeing things. I have old habits of mind clinging about me—habits based, I suppose, on needs that are over and done with. Of course, in our time, a woman was supposed not only to bear children, but to cherish them, to devote herself to them, to educate them—all the essentials of moral and mental education a child owed its mother. Or went without. Quite a number, I admit, went without. Nowadays, clearly, there is no more need for such care than if they were butterflies. I see that! Only there was an ideal—that figure of a grave, patient woman, silently and serenely mistress of a home, mother and maker of men—to love her was a sort of worship—"

He stopped and repeated, "A sort of worship."

"Ideals change," said the little man, "as needs change."

Graham awoke from an instant reverie and Asano repeated his words. Graham's mind returned to the thing at hand.

"Of course I see the perfect reasonableness of this. Restraint, soberness, the matured thought, the unselfish act, they are necessities of the barbarous state, the life of dangers. Dourness is man's tribute to unconquered nature. But man has conquered nature now for all practical purposes—his political affairs are managed by Bosses with a black police—and life is joyous."

He looked at the dancers again. "Joyous," he said.

"There are weary moments," said the little officer reflectively.

"They all look young. Down there I should be visibly the oldest man. And in my own time I should have passed as middle-aged."

"They are young. There are few old people in this class in the work cities."

"How is that?"

"Old people's lives are not so pleasant as they used to be, unless they are rich to hire lovers and helpers. And we have an institution called Euthanasy."

"Ah! that Euthanasy!" said Graham. "The easy death?"

"The easy death. It is the last pleasure. The Euthanasia Company does it well. People will pay the sum—it is a costly thing—long beforehand, go off to some pleasure city and return impoverished and weary, very weary."

"There is a lot left for me to understand," said Graham after a pause. "Yet I see the logic of it all. Our array of angry virtues and sour restraints was the consequence of danger and insecurity. The Stoic, the Puritan, even in my time, were vanishing types. In the old days man

was armed against Pain, now he is eager for Pleasure. There lies the difference. Civilization has driven pain and danger so far off—for well-to-do people. And only well-to-do people matter now. I have been asleep two hundred years."

For a minute they leant on the balustrading, following the intricate evolution of the dance. Indeed the scene was very beautiful.

"Before God," said Graham suddenly, "I would rather be a wounded sentinel freezing in the snow than one of these painted fools!"

"In the snow," said Asano, "one might think differently."

"I am uncivilized," said Graham, not heeding him. "That is the trouble. I am primitive—Palaeolithic. *Their* fountain of rage and fear and anger is sealed and closed, the habits of a lifetime make them cheerful and easy and delightful. You must bear with my nineteenth century shocks and disgusts. These people, you say, are skilled workers and so forth. And while these dance, men are fighting—men are dying in Paris to keep the world—that they may dance."

Asano smiled faintly. "For that matter, men are dying in London," he said.

There was a moment's silence.

"Where do these sleep?" asked Graham.

"Above and below—an intricate warren."

"And where do they work? This is—the domestic life."

"You will see little work tonight. Half the workers are out or under arms. Half these people are keeping holiday. But we will go to the work places if you wish it."

For a time Graham watched the dancers, then suddenly turned away. "I want to see the workers. I have seen enough of these," he said.

ASANO led the way along the gallery across the dancing hall. Presently they came to a transverse passage that brought a breath of fresher, colder air.

Asano glanced at this passage as they went past, stopped, went back to it, and turned to Graham with a smile. "Here, Sir," he said, "is something—will be familiar to you at least—and yet—. But I will not tell you. Come!"

He led the way along a closed passage that presently became cold. The reverberation of their feet told that this passage was a bridge. They came into a circular gallery that was glazed in from the outer weather, and so reached a circular chamber which seemed familiar though Graham could not recall distinctly when he had entered it before. In this was a ladder—the first ladder he had seen since his awakening—up which they went, and came into a high, dark, cold place in which was another almost vertical ladder. This they ascended, Graham still perplexed.

But at the top he understood, and recognized the metallic bars to which he clung. He was in the cage under the ball of St. Paul's. The dome rose but a little way above the general contour of the city, into the still twilight, and sloped away, shining greasily under a few distant lights, into a circumambient ditch of darkness.

Out between the bars he looked upon the wind-clear northern sky and saw the starry constellations all unchanged. Capella hung in the west, Vega was rising, and the seven glittering points of the Great Bear swept overhead in their stately circle about the Pole.

He saw these stars in a clear gap of sky. To the east and south the great circular shapes of complaining wind-wheels blotted out the heavens, so that the glare about the Council House was hidden. To the south-west hung Orion, showing like a pallid ghost through a tracery of ironwork and interlacing shapes above a dazzling coruscation of lights. A bellowing and siren screaming that

came from the flying stages warned the world that one of the aeroplanes was ready to start. He remained for a space gazing toward the glaring stage. Then his eyes went back to the northward constellations.

For a long time he was silent. "This," he said at last, smiling in the shadow, "seems the strangest thing of all. To stand in the dome of Saint Paul's and look once more upon these familiar, silent stars!"

Thence Graham was taken by Asano along devious ways to the great gambling and business quarters where the bulk of the fortunes in the city were lost and made. It impressed him as a well-nigh interminable series of very high halls, surrounded by tiers upon tiers of galleries into which opened thousands of offices, and traversed by a complicated multitude of bridges, footways, aerial motor rails, and trapeze and cable leaps. And here more than anywhere the note of vehement vitality, of uncontrollable, hasty activity, rose high. Everywhere was violent advertisement, until his brain swam at the tumult of light and color. And Babble Machines of a peculiarly rancid tone were abundant and filled the air with strenuous squealing and an idiotic slang. "Skin your eyes and slide," "Gewhoop, Bonanza," "Gollipers come and hark!"

The place seemed to him to be dense with people either profoundly agitated or swelling with obscure cunning, yet he learnt that the place was comparatively empty, that the great political convulsion of the last few days had reduced transactions to an unprecedented minimum. In one huge place were long avenues of roulette tables, each with an excited, undignified crowd about it; in another a yelping Babel of white-faced women and red-necked leathery-lunged men bought and sold the shares of an absolutely fictitious business undertaking which, every five minutes, paid a dividend of ten per cent and cancelled a certain proportion of its shares by means of a lottery wheel.

These business activities were prosecuted with an energy that readily passed into violence, and Graham approaching a dense crowd found at its centre a couple of prominent merchants in violent controversy with teeth and nails on some delicate point of business etiquette. Something still remained in life to be fought for. Further he had a shock at a vehement announcement in phonetic letters of scarlet flame, each twice the height of a man, that "WE ASSURE THE PROPRAIET'R. WE ASSURE THE PROPRAIET'R."

"Who's the proprietor?" he asked.

"You."

"But what do they assure me?" he asked. "What do they assure me?"

"Didn't you have assurance?"

Graham thought. "Insurance?"

"Yes—Insurance. I remember that was the older word. They are insuring your life. Dozands of people are taking out policies, myriads of lions are being put on you. And further on other people are buying annuities. They do that on everybody who is at all prominent. Look there!"

A crowd of people surged and roared, and Graham saw a vast black screen suddenly illuminated in still larger letters of burning purple. "Anuetes on the Propriet'r—x 5 pr. G." The people began to boo and shout at this, a number of hard breathing, wild-eyed men came running past, clawing with hooked fingers at the air. There was a furious crush about a little doorway.

Asano did a brief calculation. "Seventeen per cent per annum is their annuity on you. They would not pay so much per cent if they could see you now, Sire. But they do not know. Your own annuities used to be a very safe investment, but now you are sheer gambling, of course. This is probably a desperate bid. I doubt if people will get their money."

The crowd of would-be annuitants grew so thick about them that for some time they could move neither forward

nor backward. Graham noticed what appeared to him to be a high proportion of women among the speculators, and was reminded again of the economical independence of their sex. They seemed remarkably well able to take care of themselves in the crowd, using their elbows with particular skill, as he learnt to his cost. One curly-headed person caught in the pressure for a space, looked steadfastly at him several times, almost as if she recognized him, and then, edging deliberately towards him, touched his hand with her arm in a scarcely accidental manner, and made it plain by a look as ancient as Chaldea that he had found favor in her eyes. And then a lank, grey-bearded man, perspiring copiously in a noble passion of self-help, blind to all earthly things save that glaring bait, thrust between them in a cataclysmal rush towards that alluring "x 5 pr. G."

"I want to get out of this," said Graham to Asano. "This is not what I came to see. Show me the workers. I want to see the people in blue. These parasitic lunatics—"

He found himself wedged in a struggling mass of people, and this hopeful sentence went unfinished.

CHAPTER XXI

The Under Side

FROM the Business Quarter they presently passed by the running ways into a remote quarter of the city, where the bulk of the manufactures was done. On their way the platforms crossed the Thames twice, and passed in a broad viaduct across one of the great roads that entered the city from the North. In both cases his impression was swift and in both very vivid. The river was a broad wrinkled glitter of black sea water, overarched by buildings, and vanishing either way into a blackness starred with receding lights. A string of black barges passed seaward, manned by blue-clad men. The road was a long and very broad and high tunnel, along which big-wheeled machines drove noiselessly and swiftly. Here, too, the distinctive blue of the Labor Company was in abundance. The smoothness of the double tracks, the largeness and the lightness of the big pneumatic wheels in proportion to the vehicular body, struck Graham most vividly. One lank and very high carriage with longitudinal metallic rods hung with the dripping carcasses of many hundred sheep arrested his attention unduly. Abruptly the edge of the archway cut and blotted out the picture.

Presently they left the way and descended by a lift and traversed a passage that sloped downward, and so came to a descending lift again. The appearance of things changed. Even the pretence of architectural ornament disappeared, the lights diminished in number and size, the architecture became more and more massive in proportion to the spaces as the factory quarters were reached. And in the dusty biscuit-making place of the potters, among the felspar mills, in the furnace rooms of the metal workers, among the incandescent lakes of crude Eadhamite, the blue canvas clothing was on man, woman and child.

Many of these great and dusty galleries were silent avenues of machinery, endless raked out ashen furnaces testified to the revolutionary dislocation, but wherever there was work it was being done by slow-moving workers in blue canvas. The only people not in blue canvas were the overlookers of the work-places and the orange-clad Labor Police. And fresh from the flushed faces of the dancing halls, the voluntary vigors of the business quarter, Graham could note the pinched faces, the feeble muscles, and weary eyes of many of the latter-day workers. Such as he saw at work were noticeably inferior in physique to the few gaily dressed managers and forewomen who were directing their labors. The burly la-

lors of the old Victorian times had followed the dray horse and all such living force producers, to extinction; the place of his costly muscles was taken by some dexterous machine. The latter-day laborer, male as well as female, was essentially a machine-minder and feeder, a servant and attendant, or an artist under direction.

The women, in comparison with those Graham remembered, were as a class distinctly plain and flat chested. Two hundred years of emancipation from the moral restraints of Puritanical religion, two hundred years of city life, had done their work in eliminating the strain of feminine beauty and vigor from the blue canvas myriads. To be brilliant physically or mentally, to be in any way attractive or exceptional, had been and was still a certain way of emancipation to the drudge, a line of escape to the Pleasure City and its splendors and delights, and at last to the Euthanasia and peace. To be steadfast against such inducements was scarcely to be expected of meanly nourished souls. In the young cities of Graham's former life, the newly aggregated laboring mass had been a diverse multitude, still stirred by the tradition of personal honor and a high morality; now it was differentiating into a distinct class, with a moral and physical difference of its own—even with a dialect of its own.

They penetrated downward, ever downward, towards the working places. Presently they passed underneath one of the streets of the moving ways, and saw its platforms running on their rails far overhead, and chinks of white lights between the transverse slits. The factories that were not working were sparsely lighted; to Graham they and their shrouded aisles of giant machines seemed plunged in gloom, and even where work was going on the illumination was far less brilliant than upon the public ways.

Beyond the blazing lakes of Eadhamite he came to the warren of the jewelers, and, with some difficulty and by using his signature, obtained admission to these galleries. They were high and dark, and rather cold. In the first a few men were making ornaments of gold filagree, each man at a little bench by himself, and with a little shaded light. The long vista of light patches, with the nimble fingers brightly lit and moving among the gleaming yellow coils, and the intent face like the face of a ghost, in each shadow, had the oddest effect.

The work was beautifully executed, but without any strength of modeling or drawing, for the most part intricate grotesques or the ringing of the changes on a geometrical motif. These workers wore a peculiar white uniform without pockets or sleeves. They assumed this on coming to work, but at night they were stripped and examined before they left the premises of the Company. In spite of every precaution, the Labor policeman told them in a depressed tone, the Company was not infrequently robbed.

Beyond was a gallery of women busied in cutting and setting slabs of artificial ruby, and next these were men and women busied together upon the slabs of copper net that formed the basis of *cloisonne* tiles. Many of these workers had lips and nostrils a livid white, due to a disease caused by a peculiar purple enamel that chanced to be much in fashion. Asano apologized to Graham for the offense of their faces, but excused himself on the score of convenience of this route. "This is what I wanted to see," said Graham; "this is what I wanted to see," trying to avoid a start at a particularly striking disfigurement that suddenly stared him in the face.

"She might have done better with herself than that," said Asano.

Graham made some indignant comments.

"But, Sire, "we simply could not stand that stuff without the purple," said Asano. "In your days people could stand such crudities, they were nearer the barbaric by two hundred years."

THEY continued along one of the lower galleries of this *cloisonne* factory, and came to a little bridge that spanned a vault. Looking over the parapet, Graham saw that beneath was a wharf under yet more tremendous archings than any he had seen. Three barges, smothered in floury dust, were being unloaded of their cargoes of powdered felspar by a multitude of coughing men, each guiding a little truck; the dust filled the place with a choking mist, and turned the electric glare yellow. The vague shadows of these workers gesticulated about their feet, and rushed to and fro against a long stretch of whitewashed wall. Every now and then one would stop to cough.

A shadowy, huge mass of masonry rising out of the inky water, brought to Graham's mind the thought of the multitude of ways and galleries and lifts, that rose floor above floor overhead between him and the sky. The men worked in silence under the supervision of two of the Labor Police; their feet made a hollow thunder on the plunks along which they went to and fro. And as he looked at this scene, some hidden voice in the darkness began to sing.

"Stop that!" shouted one of the policemen, but the order was disobeyed, and first one and then all the white-stained men who were working there had taken up the beating refrain, singing it defiantly, the Song of the Revolt. The feet upon the planks thundered now to the rhythm of the song, tramp, tramp, tramp. The policeman who had shouted glanced at his fellow, and Graham saw him shrug his shoulders. He made no further effort to stop the singing.

And so they went through these factories and places of toil, seeing many painful and grim things. But why should the gentle reader be depressed? Surely to a refined nature our present world is distressing enough without bothering ourselves about these miseries to come. We shall not suffer anyhow. Our children may, but what is that to us? That walk left on Graham's mind a maze of memories, fluctuating pictures of swathed halls, and crowded vaults seen through clouds of dust, of intricate machines, the racing threads of looms, the heavy beat of stamping machinery, the roar and rattle of belt and armature, of ill-lit subterranean aisles of sleeping places, illimitable vistas of pin-point lights. And here the smell of tanning, and here the reek of a brewery and here, unprecedented reeks. And everywhere were pillars and cross archings of such a massiveness as Graham had never before seen, thick Titans of greasy, shining brickwork crushed beneath the vast weight of that complex city world, even as these anæmic millions were crushed by its complexity. And everywhere were pale features, lean limbs, disfigurement and degradation.

Once and again, and again a third time, Graham heard the song of the revolt during his long, unpleasant research in these places, and once he saw a confused struggle down a passage, and learnt that a number of these serfs had seized their bread before their work was done. Graham was ascending towards the ways again when he saw a number of blue-clad children running down a transverse passage, and presently perceived the reason of their panic in a company of the Labor Police armed with clubs, trotting toward some unknown disturbance. And then came a remote disorder. But for the most part this remnant that worked, worked hopelessly. All the spirit that was left in fallen humanity was above in the streets that night, calling for the Master, and valiantly and noisily keeping its arms.

They emerged from these wanderings and stood blinking in the bright light of the middle passage of the platforms again. They became aware of the remote hooting and yelping of the machines of one of the General Intelligence Offices, and suddenly came men running, and along the platforms and about the ways everywhere was a shouting and crying. Then a woman with a face of



He saw a confused struggle down a passage.

mute white terror, and another who gasped and shrieked as she ran.

"What has happened now?" said Graham puzzled, for he could not understand their thick speech. Then he heard it in English and perceived that the thing that everyone was shouting, that men yelled to one another, that women took up screaming, that was passing like the first breeze of a thunderstorm, chill and sudden through the city, was this: "Ostrog has ordered the Black Police to London. The Black Police are coming from South Africa. . . . The Black Police. The Black Police."

Asano's face was white and astonished; he hesitated, looked at Graham's face, and told him the thing he already knew. "But how can they know?" asked Asano.

Graham heard someone shouting. "Stop all work. Stop all work," and a swarthy hunchback, ridiculously gay in green and gold, came leaping down the platforms toward him, bawling again and again in good English, "This is Ostrog's doing, Ostrog, the Knave! The Master is betrayed." His voice was hoarse and a thin foam dropped from his ugly shouting mouth. He yelled an unspeakable horror that the Black Police had done in Paris, and so passed shrieking, "Ostrog the Knave!"

For a moment Graham stood still, for it had come upon him again that these things were a dream. He looked up at the great cliff of buildings on either side, vanishing into blue haze at last above the lights, and down to the roaring tiers of platforms, and the shouting, running people who were gesticulating past. "The Master is betrayed!" they cried. "The Master is betrayed!"

Suddenly the situation shaped itself in his mind real and urgent. His heart began to beat fast and strong.

"It has come," he said. "I might have known. The hour has come."

He thought swiftly. "What am I to do?"

"Go back to the Council House," said Asano.

"Why should I not appeal—? The people are here."

"You will lose time. They will doubt if it is you. But they will mass about the Council House. There you will find their leaders. Your strength is there—with them."

"Suppose this is only a rumor?"

"It sounds true," said Asano.

"Let us have the facts," said Graham.

Asano shrugged his shoulders. "We had better get toward the Council House," he cried. "That is where they will swarm. Even now the ruins may be impassable."

Graham regarded him doubtfully and followed him.

They went up the stepped platforms to the swiftest one, and there Asano accosted a laborer. The answers to his questions were in the thick, vulgar speech.

"What did he say?" asked Graham.

"He knows little, but he told me that the Black Police would have arrived here before the people knew—had not someone in the Wind-Vane Offices learnt. He said a girl."

"A girl? Not—?"

"He said a girl—he did not know who she was—who came out from the Council House crying aloud, and told the men at work among the ruins."

And then another thing was shouted, something that turned an aimless tumult into determinate movements, it came like a wind along the street. "To your Wards, to your Wards. Every man get arms. Every man to his Ward!"

CHAPTER XXII

The Struggle in the Council House

ASANO and Graham hurried along to the ruins about the Council House; they saw everywhere the excitement of the people rising. "To your Wards!" "To your Wards!" Everywhere men and women in blue were hurrying from unknown subterranean employments, up the staircases of the middle path; at one place Graham saw an arsenal of the revolutionary committee besieged by a crowd of shouting men, at another a couple of men in the hated yellow uniform of the Labor Police, pursued by a gathering crowd, fled precipitately along the swift way that went in the opposite direction.

The cries of "To your Wards!" became at last a continuous shouting as they drew near the Government quarter. Many of the shouts were unintelligible. "Ostrog has betrayed us," one man bawled in a hoarse voice, again and again, dinning that refrain into Graham's ear until it haunted him. This person stayed close beside Graham and Asano on the swift way, shouting to the people who swarmed on the lower platforms as he rushed past them. His cry about Ostrog alternated with some incomprehensible orders. Presently he went leaping down and disappeared.

Graham's mind was filled with the din. His plans were vague and unformed. He had one picture of some commanding position from which he could address the multitudes, another of meeting Ostrog face to face. He was full of rage, of tense muscular excitement, his hands gripped, his lips were pressed together.

The way to the Council House across the ruins was impassable, but Asano met that difficulty and took Graham into the premises of the central post-office. The post-office was nominally at work, but the blue-clothed porters moved sluggishly or had stopped to stare through the arches of their galleries at the shouting men who were going by outside. "Every man to his Ward! Every man to his Ward!" Here, by Asano's advice, Graham revealed his identity.

They crossed to the Council House by a cable cradle. Already in the brief interval since the capitulation of the Councillors a great change had been wrought in the appearance of the ruins. The spurting cascades of the ruptured sea water-mains had been captured or tamed, and huge temporary pipes ran overhead along a flimsy looking fabric of girders. The sky was laced with restored cables and wires that served the Council House, and a mass of new fabric with cranes and other building machines going to and fro upon it, projected to the left of the white pile.

The moving ways that ran across this area had been restored, albeit for once running under the open sky. These were the ways that Graham had seen from the little balcony in the hour of his awakening, not nine days since, and the hall of his Trance had been on the further

side, where now shapeless piles of smashed and shattered masonry were heaped together.

It was already high day and the sun was shining brightly. Out of their tall caverns of blue electric light came the swift ways crowded with multitudes of people, who poured off them and gathered ever denser over the wreckage and confusion of the ruins. The air was full of their shouting, and they were pressing and swaying towards the central building. For the most part that shouting mass consisted of shapeless swarms, but here and there Graham could see that a rude discipline struggled to establish itself. And every voice clamored for order in the chaos. "To your Wards! Every man to his Ward!"

The cable carried them into a hall which Graham recognized as the ante-chamber to the Hall of the Atlas, about the gallery of which he had walked days ago with Howard to show himself to the vanished Council, an hour from his awakening. Now the place was empty except for two cable attendants. These men seemed hugely astonished to recognize the Sleeper in the man who swung down from the cross seat.

"Where is Helen Wotton?" he demanded. "Where is Helen Wotton?"

They did not know.

"Then where is Ostrog? I must see Ostrog forthwith. He has disobeyed me. I have come back to take things out of his hands." Without waiting for Asano, he went straight across the place, ascended the steps at the further end, and pulling the curtain aside found himself facing the perpetually laboring Titan.

The hall was empty. Its appearance had changed very greatly since his first sight of it. It had suffered serious injury in the violent struggle of the first outbreak. On the right hand side of the great figure the upper half of the wall had been torn away for nearly two hundred feet of its length, and a sheet of the same glassy film that had enclosed Graham at his awakening had been drawn across the gap. This deadened, but did not altogether exclude the roar of the people outside. "Wards! Wards! Wards" they seemed to be saying. Through it there were visible the beams and supports of metal scaffoldings that rose and fell according to the requirements of a great crowd of workmen. An idle building machine, with lank arms of red painted metal that caught the still plastic blocks of mineral paste and swung them neatly into position, stretched gauntly across this green tinted picture. On it were still a number of workmen staring at the crowd below. For a moment he stood regarding these things, and Asano overtook him.

"Ostrog," said Asano, "will be in the small offices beyond there." The little man looked livid now and his eyes searched Graham's face.

They had scarcely advanced ten paces from the curtain before a little panel to the left of the Atlas rolled up, and Ostrog, accompanied by Lincoln and followed by two black and yellow clad negroes, appeared crossing the remote corner of the hall, toward a second panel that was raised and open. "Ostrog," shouted Graham, and at the sound of his voice the little party turned astonished.

Ostrog said something to Lincoln and advanced alone.

Graham was the first to speak. His voice was loud and dictatorial. "What is this I hear?" he asked. "Are you bringing negroes here—to keep the people down?"

"It is none too soon," said Ostrog. "They have been getting out of hand more and more, since the revolt. I under-estimated—"

"Do you mean that these infernal negroes are on the way?"

"On the way. As it is, you have seen the people—outside?"

"No wonder! But—after what was said. You have taken too much on yourself, Ostrog."

Ostrog said nothing, but drew nearer.

"These negroes must not come to London," said Graham. "I am Master and they shall not come."

Ostrog glanced at Lincoln, who at once came towards them with his two attendants close behind him. "Why not?" asked Ostrog.

"White men must be mastered by white men. Besides—"

"The negroes are only an instrument."

"But that is not the question. I am the Master. I mean to be the Master. And I tell you these negroes shall not come."

"The people—"

"I believe in the people."

"Because you are an anachronism. You are a man out of the Past—an accident. You are Owner perhaps of half the property in the world. But you are not Master. You do not know enough to be Master."

He glanced at Lincoln again. "I know now what you think—I can guess something of what you mean to do. Even now it is not too late to warn you. You dream of human equality—of a socialistic order—you have all those worn-out dreams of the nineteenth century fresh and vivid in your mind, and you would rule this age that you do not understand."

"Listen!" said Graham. "You can hear it—a sound like the sea. Not voices—but a voice. Do you altogether understand?"

"We taught them that," said Ostrog.

"Perhaps. Can you teach them to forget it? But enough of this! These negroes must not come."

There was a pause and Ostrog looked him in the eyes.

"They will," he said.

"I forbid it," said Graham.

"They have started."

"I will not have it."

"No," said Ostrog. "Sorry as I am to follow the method of the Council—. For your own good—you must not side with—Disorder. And now that you are here—. It was kind of you to come here."

LINCOLN laid his hand on Graham's shoulder. Abruptly Graham realized the enormity of his blunder in coming to the Council House. He turned towards the curtains that separated the hall from the ante-chamber. The clutching hand of Asano intervened. In another moment Lincoln had grasped Graham's cloak.

He turned and struck at Lincoln's face, and incontinently a negro had him by collar and arm. He wrenched himself away, his sleeve tore noisily, and he stumbled back, to be tripped by the other attendant. Then he struck the ground heavily and he was staring at the distant ceiling of the hall.

He shouted, rolled over, struggling fiercely, clutched an attendant's leg and threw him headlong, and struggled to his feet.

Lincoln appeared before him, went down heavily again with a blow under the point of the jaw and lay still. Graham made two strides, stumbled. And then Ostrog's arm was round his neck, he was pulled over backward, fell heavily, and his arms were pinned to the ground. After a few violent efforts, he ceased to struggle and lay staring at Ostrog's heaving throat.

"You—are—a prisoner," panted Ostrog, exulting. "You—were rather a fool—to come back."

Graham turned his head about and perceived through the irregular green window in the walls of the hall the men who had been working the building cranes gesticulating excitedly to the people below them. They had seen!

Ostrog followed his eyes and started. He shouted something to Lincoln, but Lincoln did not move. A bullet smashed among the mouldings above the Atlas. The two sheets of transparent matter that had been stretched

across the gap were rent, the edges of the torn aperture darkened, curved, ran rapidly towards the framework, and in a moment the Council chamber stood open to the air. A chilly gust blew in by the gap, bringing with it a war of voices from the ruinous spaces without, an elvish babblement, "Save the Master!" "What are they doing to the Master?" "The Master is betrayed!"

And then he realized that Ostrog's attention was distracted, that Ostrog's grip had relaxed, and, wrenching his arms free, he struggled to his knees. In another moment he had thrust Ostrog back, and he was on one foot, his hand gripping Ostrog's throat, and Ostrog's hands clutching the silk about his neck.

But now men were coming towards them from the dais—men whose intentions he misunderstood. He had a glimpse of someone running in the distance towards the curtains of the antechamber, and then Ostrog had slipped from him and these newcomers were upon him. To his infinite astonishment, they seized him. They obeyed the shouts of Ostrog.

He was lugged a dozen yards before he realized that they were not friends—that they were dragging him towards the open panel. When he saw this he pulled back, he tried to fling himself down, he shouted for help with all his strength. And this time there were answering cries.

The grip upon his neck relaxed, and behold, in the lower corner of the rent upon the wall, first one and then a number of little black figures appeared shouting and waving arms. They came leaping down from the gap into the light gallery that had led to the Silent Rooms. They ran along it, so near were they that Graham could see the weapons in their hands. Then Ostrog was shouting in his ear to the men who held him, and once more he was struggling with all his strength against their endeavors to thrust him towards the opening that yawned to receive him. "They can't come down," panted Ostrog. "They daren't fire. It's all right." "We'll save him from them yet."

For long minutes as it seemed to Graham that inglorious struggle continued. His clothes were rent in a dozen places, he was covered in dust, one hand had been trodden upon. He could hear the shouts of his supporters, and once he heard shots. He could feel his strength giving way, feel his efforts wild and aimless. But no help came, and surely, irresistibly, that black, yawning opening came nearer.

The pressure upon him relaxed and he struggled up. He saw Ostrog's grey head receding and perceived that he was no longer held. He turned about and came full into a man in black. One of the green weapons cracked close to him, a drift of pungent smoke came into his face, and a steel blade flashed. The huge chamber span about him.

He saw a man in pale blue stabbing one of the black and yellow attendants not three yards from his face. Then hands were upon him again.

He was being pulled in two directions now. It seemed as though people were shouting to him. He wanted to understand and could not. Someone was clutching about his thighs, he was being hoisted in spite of his vigorous efforts. He understood suddenly, he ceased to struggle. He was lifted up on men's shoulders and carried away from that devouring panel. Ten thousand throats were cheering.

He saw men in blue and black hurrying after the retreating Ostrogites and firing. Lifted up, he saw now across the whole expanse of the hall beneath the Atlas image, saw that he was being carried towards the raised platform in the center of the place. The far end of the hall was already full of people running towards him. They were looking at him and cheering.

He became aware that a sort of body-guard surrounded him. Active men about him shouted vague orders. He

saw close at hand the black moustached man in yellow who had been among those who had greeted him in the public theatre, shouting directions. The hall was already densely packed with swaying people, the little metal gallery sagged with a shouting load, the curtains at the end had been torn away, and the ante-chamber was revealed densely crowded. He could scarcely make the man near him hear for the tumult about them. "Where has Ostrog gone?" he asked.

The man he questioned pointed over the heads towards the lower panels about the hall on the side opposite the gap. They stood open and armed men, blue clad with black sashes, were running through them and vanishing into the chambers and passages beyond. It seemed to Graham that a sound of firing drifted through the riot. He was carried in a staggering curve across the great hall towards an opening beneath the gap.

He perceived men working with a sort of rude discipline to keep the crowd off him, to make a space clear about him. He passed out of the hall, and saw a crude, new wall rising blankly before him topped by blue sky. He was swung down to his feet; someone gripped his arm and guided him. He found the man in yellow close at hand. They were taking him up a narrow stairway of brick, and close at hand rose the great red painted masses, the cranes and levers and the still engines of the big building machine.

He was at the top of the steps. He was hurried across a narrow railed footway, and suddenly with a vast shouting the amphitheatre of ruins opened again before him. "The Master is with us! The Master! The Master!" The shout swept athwart the lake of faces like a wave, broke against the distant cliff of ruins, and came back in a welter of cries. "The Master is on our side!"

GRAHAM perceived that he was no longer encompassed by people, that he was standing upon a little temporary platform of white metal, part of a flimsy seeming scaffolding that laced about the great mass of the Council House. Over all the huge expanse of the ruins, swayed and addied the shouting people; and here and there the black banners of the revolutionary societies ducked and swayed and formed rare nuclei of organization in the chaos. Up the steep stairs of wall and scaffolding by which his rescuers had reached the opening in the Atlas Chamber, clung a solid crowd, and little energetic black figures clinging to pillars and projections were strenuous to induce these congested masses to stir. Behind him, at a higher point on the scaffolding, a number of men struggled upwards with the flapping folds of a huge black standard. Through the yawning gap in the walls below him he could look down upon the packed attentive multitudes in the Hall of the Atlas. The distant flying stages to the south came out bright and vivid, brought nearer as it seemed by an unusual translucency of the air. A solitary aeropile beat up from the central stage as if to meet the coming aeroplanes.

"What had become of Ostrog?" asked Graham, and even as he spoke he saw that all eyes were turned from him towards the crest of the Council House building. He looked also in this direction of universal attention. For a moment he saw nothing but the jagged corner of a wall, hard and clear against the sky. Then in the shadow he perceived the interior of a room and recognized with a start the green and white decorations of his former prison. And coming quickly across this opened room and up to the very verge of the cliff of the ruins came a little white clad figure followed by two other smaller seeming figures in black and yellow. He heard the man beside him exclaim "Ostrog," and turned to ask a question. But he never did, because of the startled exclamation of another of those who were with him and a long finger suddenly pointing. He looked, and beheld the aeropile that had been rising from the flying stage when last

he had looked in that direction, was driving towards them. The swift steady flight was still novel enough to hold his attention.

Nearer it came, growing rapidly larger and larger, until it had swept over the further edge of the ruins and into view of the dense multitudes below. It drooped across the space and rose and passed overhead, rising to clear the mass of the Council House, a filmy translucent shape with the solitar- aeronaut peering down through its ribs. It vanished beyond the skyline of the ruins.

Graham transferred his attention to Ostrog. He was signalling with his hands, and his attendants were busy breaking down the wall beside him. In another moment the aeropile came into view again, a little thing far away, coming round in a wide curve and going slower.

Then suddenly the man in yellow shouted: "What are they doing? What are the people doing? Why is Ostrog left there? Why is he not captured? They will lift him—the aeropile will lift him! Ah!"

The exclamation was echoed by a shout from the ruins. The rattling sound of the green weapons drifted across the intervening gulf to Graham, and, looking down, he saw a number of black and yellow uniforms running along one of the galleries that lay open to the air below the promontory upon which Ostrog stood. They fired as they ran at men unseen, and then emerged a number of pale blue figures in pursuit. These minute fighting figures had the oddest effect; they seemed as they ran like little model soldiers in a toy. This queer appearance of a house cut open gave that struggle amidst furniture and passages a quality of unreality. It was perhaps two hundred yards away from him, and very nearly fifty above the heads in the ruins below. The black and yellow men ran into an open archway, and turned and fired a volley. One of the blue pursuers striding forward close to the edge, flung up his arms, staggered sideways, seemed to Graham's sense to hang over the edge for several seconds, and fell headlong down. Graham saw him strike a projecting corner, fly out, head over heels, head over heels, and vanish behind the red arm of the building machine.

And then a shadow came between Graham and the sun. He looked up and the sky was clear, but he knew the aeropile had passed. Ostrog had vanished. The man in yellow thrust before him, zealous and perspiring, pointing and blatant.

"They are grounding!" cried the man in yellow. "They are grounding! Tell the people to fire at him. Tell them to fire at him!"

Graham could not understand. He heard loud voices repeating these enigmatical orders.

Suddenly over the edge of the ruins he saw the prow of the aeropile come gliding and stop with a jerk. In a moment Graham understood that the thing had grounded in order that Ostrog might escape by it. He saw a blue haze climbing out of the gulf, perceived that the people below him were now firing up at the projecting stern.

A man beside him cheered hoarsely, and he saw that the blue rebels had gained the archway that had been contested by the men in black and yellow a moment before, and were running in a continual stream along the open passage.

And suddenly the aeropile slipped over the edge of the Council House and fell. It dropped, tilting at an angle of forty-five degrees, and dropping so steeply that it seemed to Graham, it seemed perhaps to most of those below, that it could not possibly rise again.

It fell so closely past him that he could see Ostrog clutching the guides of the seat, with his grey hair streaming; see the white-faced aeronaut wrenching over the lever that drove the engine along its guides. He heard the apprehensive vague cry of innumerable men below.

Graham clutched the railing before him and gasped. The second seemed an age. The lower van of the aeropile passed within an ace of touching the people, who yelled and screamed and trampled one another below.

And then it rose.

For a moment it looked as if it could not possibly clear the opposite cliff, and then that it could not possibly clear the wind-wheel that rotated beyond.

And behold! it was clear and soaring, still heeling sideways, upward into the wind-swept sky.

The suspense of the moment gave place to a fury of exasperation as the swarming people realized that Ostrog had escaped them. With belated activity they renewed their fire, until the rattling wove into a roar, until the whole area became dim and blue and the air pungent with the thin smoke of their weapons.

Too late! The aeropile dwindled smaller and smaller, and curved about and swept gracefully downward to the flying stage from which it had so lately risen. Ostrog had escaped.

For a while a confused babblement arose from the ruins, and then the universal attention came back to Graham, perched high among the scaffolding. He saw the faces of the people turned towards him, heard their shouts at his rescue. From the throat of the ways came the song of the revolt spreading like a breeze across that swaying sea of men.

The little group of men about him shouted congratulations on his escape. The man in yellow was close to him with a set face and shining eyes. And the song was rising, louder and louder; tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp.

Slowly the realization came of the full meaning of these things to him, the perception of the swift change in his position. Ostrog, who had stood beside him whenever he had faced that shouting multitude before, was beyond there—the antagonist. There was no one to rule for him any longer. Even the people about him, the leaders and organizers of the multitude, looked to see what he would do, looked to him to act, awaited his orders. He was King indeed. His puppet reign was at an end.

He was very intent to do the thing that was expected of him. His nerves and muscles were quivering, his mind was perhaps a little confused, but he felt neither fear nor anger. His hand that had been trodden upon throbbed and was hot. He was a little nervous about his bearing. He knew he was not afraid, but he was anxious not to seem afraid. In his former life he had often been more excited in playing games of skill. He was desirous of immediate action, he knew he must not think too much in detail of the huge complexity of the struggle about him lest he should be paralysed by the sense of its intricacy. Over there those square blue shapes, the flying stages, meant Ostrog; against Ostrog he was fighting for the world.

CHAPTER XXIII

While the Aeroplanes Were Coming

FOR a time the Master of the Earth was not even master of his own mind. Even his will seemed a will not his own, his own acts surprised him and were but a part of the confusion of strange experiences that poured across his being. These things were definite, the aeroplanes were coming, Helen Wotton had warned the people of their coming, and he was Master of the Earth. Each of these facts seemed struggling for complete possession of his thoughts. They protruded from a background of swarming halls, elevated passages, rooms jammed with ward leaders in council, kinematograph and telephone rooms, and windows looking out on a seething sea of marching men. The man in yellow, and men whom he fancied were called Ward Leaders, were either propelling him forward or following him obedi-

ently; it was hard to tell. Perhaps they were doing a little of both. Perhaps some power unseen and unsuspected, propelled them all. He was aware that he was going to make a proclamation to the People of the Earth, aware of certain grandiose phrases floating in his mind as the thing he meant to say. Many little things happened, and then he found himself with the man in yellow entering a little room where this proclamation of his was to be made.

This room was grotesquely latter-day in its appointments. In the centre was a bright oval lit by shaded electric lights from above. The rest was in shadow, and the double finely fitting doors through which he came from the swarming Hall of the Atlas made the place very still. The dead thud of these as they closed behind him, the sudden cessation of the tumult in which he had been living for hours, the quivering circle of light, the whispers and quick noiseless movements of vaguely visible attendants in the shadows, had a strange effect upon Graham. The huge ears of a phonographic mechanism gaped in a battery for his words, the black eyes of great photographic cameras awaited his beginning, beyond metal rods and coils glittered dimly, and something whirled about with a droning hum. He walked into the centre of the light, and his shadow drew together black and sharp to a little blot at his feet.

The vague shape of the thing he meant to say was already in his mind. But this silence, this isolation, the sudden withdrawal from that contagious crowd, this silent audience of gaping, glaring machines had not been in his anticipation. All his supporters seemed withdrawn together; he seemed to have dropped into this suddenly, suddenly to have discovered himself. In a moment he was changed. He found that he now feared to be inadequate, he feared to be theatrical, he feared the quality of his voice, the quality of his wit. Astonished, he turned to the man in yellow with a propitiatory gesture. "For a moment," he said, "I must wait. I did not think it would be like this. I must think of the thing I have to say."

While he was still hesitating there came an agitated messenger with news that the foremost aeroplanes were passing over Arawan.

"Arawan?" he said. "Where is that? But anyhow, they are coming. They will be here. When?"

"By twilight."

"Great God! In only a few hours. What news of the flying stages?" he asked.

"The people of the south-west wards are ready."

"Ready!"

He turned impatiently to the blank circles of the lenses again.

"I suppose it must be a sort of speech. Would to God I knew certainly the thing that should be said! Aeroplanes at Arawan! They must have started before the main fleet. And the people only ready! Surely..."

"Oh! what does it matter whether I speak well or ill?" he said, and felt the light grow brighter.

He had framed some vague sentence of democratic sentiment when suddenly doubts overwhelmed him. His belief in his heroic quality and calling he found had altogether lost its assured conviction. The picture of a little strutting futility in a windy waste of incomprehensible destinies replaced it. Abruptly it was perfectly clear to him that this revolt against Ostrog was premature, fated to failure, the impulse of passionate inadequacy against inevitable things. He thought of that swift flight of aeroplanes like the swoop of Fate towards him. He was astonished that he could have seen things in any other light. In that final emergency he debated, thrust debate resolutely aside, determined at all costs to go through with the thing he had undertaken. And he could find no word to begin. Even as he stood awkward, hesitating, with an indiscreet apology

for his inability trembling on his lips, came the noise of many people crying out, the running to and fro of feet. "Wait," cried someone, and a door opened. "She is coming," said the voices. Graham turned, and the watching lights waned.

Through the open doorway he saw a slight grey figure advancing across a spacious hall. His heart leapt. It was Helen Wotton. Behind and about her marched a riot of applause. The man in yellow came out of the nearer shadows into the circle of light.

"This is the girl who told us what Ostrog had done," he said.

Her face was aflame, and the heavy coils of her black hair fell about her shoulders. The folds of the soft silk robe she wore streamed from her and floated in the rhythm of her advance. She drew nearer and nearer, and his heart was beating fast. All his doubts were gone. The shadow of the doorway fell athwart her face and she was near him. "You have not betrayed us?" she cried. "You are with us?"

"Where have you been?" said Graham.

"At the office of the south-west wards. Until ten minutes since I did not know you had returned. I went to the office of the south-west wards to find the Ward Leaders in order that they might tell the people.

"I came back as soon as I heard—"

"I knew," she cried, "knew you would be with us. And it was I—it was I that told them. They have risen. All the world is rising. The people have awakened. Thank God that I did not act in vain! You are Master still."

"You told them," he said slowly, and he saw that in spite of her steady eyes her lips trembled and her throat rose and fell.

"I told them. I knew of the order. I was here. I heard that the negroes were to come to London to guard you and keep the people down—to keep you a prisoner. And I stopped it. I came out and told the people. And you are master still."

Graham glanced at the black lenses of the cameras, the vast listening ears, and back to her face. "I am Master still," he said slowly, and the swift rush of a fleet of aeroplanes passed across his thoughts.

"And you did this? You, who are the niece of Ostrog."

"For you," she cried. "For you! That you for whom the world has waited should not be cheated of your power."

Graham stood for a space, wordless, regarding her. His doubts and questionings had fled before her presence. He remembered the things that he had meant to say. He faced the cameras again and the light about him grew brighter. He turned again towards her.

"You have saved me," he said; "you have saved my power. And the battle is beginning. God knows what this night shall see—but not dishonor."

He paused. He addressed himself to those unseen multitudes who stared upon him through those grotesque black eyes. At first he spoke slowly.

"Men and women of the new age," he said, "You have arisen to do battle for the race! . . . There is no easy victory before us."

HE stopped to gather words. The thoughts that had been in his mind before she came returned, but transfigured, no longer touched with the shadow of a possible irrelevance. "This night is a beginning," he cried. "This battle that is coming, this battle that rushes upon us tonight, is only a beginning. All your lives, it may be, you must fight. Take no thought though I am beaten, though I am utterly overthrown."

He found the thing in his mind too vague for words. He paused momentarily, and broke into vague exhortations, and then a rush of speech came upon him. Much that he said was but the humanitarian commonplace of a vanished age, but the conviction of his voice touched

it to vitality. He stated the case of the old days to the people of the new age, to the woman at his side. "I come out of the past to you," he said, "with the memory of an age that hoped. My age was an age of dreams—of beginnings, an age of noble hopes; throughout the world we had made an end of slavery; throughout the world we had spread the desire and anticipation that wars might cease, that all men and women might live nobly, in freedom and peace. . . . So we hoped in the days that are past. And what of those hopes? How is it with man after two hundred years?"

"Great cities, vast powers, a collective greatness beyond our dreams. For that we did not work, and that has come. But how is it with the little lives that make up this greater life? How is it with the common lives? As it has been—sorrow and labor, lives cramped and unfulfilled, lives tempted by power, tempted by wealth, and gone to waste and folly. The old faiths have faded and changed, the new faith—. Is there a new faith?"

Things that he had long wished to believe, he found that he believed. He plunged at belief and seized it, and clung for a time at her level. He spoke gustily, in broken incomplete sentences, but with all his heart and strength, of this new faith within him. He spoke of the greatness of self-abnegation, of his belief in an immortal life of Humanity in which we live and move and have our being. His voice rose and fell, and the recording appliances hummed their hurried applause, dim attendants watched him out of the shadow. Through all those doubtful places his sense of that silent spectator beside him sustained his sincerity. For a few glorious moments he was carried away; he felt no doubt of his heroic quality, no doubt of his heroic words, he had it all straight and plain. His eloquence limped no longer. And at last he made an end to speaking. "Here and now," he cried, "I make my will. All that is mine in the world I give to the people of the world. All that is mine in the world I give to the people of the world. I give it to you, and myself I give to you. And as God wills, I will live for you, or I will die."

He ended with a florid gesture and turned about. He found the light of his present exaltation reflected in the face of the girl. Their eyes met; her eyes were swimming with tears of enthusiasm. They seemed to be urged towards each other. They clasped hands and stood gripped, facing one another, in an eloquent silence. She whispered. "I knew," she whispered. "I knew." He could not speak, he crushed her hand in his. His mind was the theatre of gigantic passions.

The man in yellow was beside them. Neither had noted his coming. He was saying that the south-west wards were marching. "I never expected it so soon," he cried. "They have done wonders. You must send them a word to help them on their way."

Graham dropped Helen's hand and stared at him absent-mindedly. Then with a start he returned to his previous preoccupation about the flying stages.

"Yes," he said. "That is good, that is good." He weighed a message. "Tell them;—well done South West."

He turned his eyes to Helen Wotton again. His face expressed his struggle between conflicting ideas. "We must capture the flying stages," he explained. "Unless we can do that they will land negroes. At all costs we must prevent that."

He felt even as he spoke that this was not what had been in his mind before the interruption. He saw a touch of surprise in her eyes. She seemed about to speak and a shrill bell drowned her voice.

It occurred to Graham that she expected him to lead these marching people, that that was the thing he had to do. He made the offer abruptly. He addressed the man in yellow, but he spoke to her. He saw her face respond. "Here I am doing nothing," he said.

"It is impossible," protested the man in yellow. "It is a fight in a warren. Your place is here."

He explained elaborately. He motioned towards the room where Graham must wait, he insisted no other course was possible. "We must know where you are," he said. "At any moment a crisis may arise needing your presence and decision." The room was a luxurious little apartment with news machines and a broken mirror that had once been *en rapport* with the crow's nest specula. It seemed a matter of course to Graham that Helen should stop for him.

A PICTURE of such a vast dramatic struggle as the masses in the ruins had suggested had drifted through his mind. But here was no spectacular battlefield such as he imagined. Instead was seclusion—and suspense. It was only as the afternoon wore on that he pieced together a truer picture of the fight that was raging, inaudibly and invisibly, within four miles of him, beneath the Roehampton stage. A strange and unprecedented contest it was, a battle that was a hundred thousand little battles, a battle in a sponge of ways and channels, fought out of sight of sky or sun under the electric glare, fought out in a vast confusion by multitudes untrained in arms, led chiefly by acclamation, multitudes dulled by mindless labor and enervated by the tradition of two hundred years of servile security against multitudes demoralized by lives of venial privilege and sensual indulgence. They had no artillery, no differentiation into this force or that; the only weapon on either side was the little green metal carbine, whose secret manufacture and sudden distribution in enormous quantities had been one of Ostrog's culminating moves against the Council. Few had had any experience with this weapon, many had never discharged one, many who carried it came unprovided with ammunition; never was wilder firing in the history of warfare. It was a battle of amateurs, a hideous experimental warfare, armed rioters fighting armed rioters, armed rioters swept forward by the words and fury of a song, by the trampling sympathy of their numbers, pouring in countless myriads towards the smaller ways, the disabled lifts, the galleries slippery with blood, the halls and passages choked with smoke, beneath the flying stages, to learn there when retreat was hopeless the ancient mysteries of warfare. And overhead save for a few sharpshooters upon the roof spaces and for a few bands and threads of vapor that multiplied and darkened towards the evening, the day was a clear serenity. Ostrog it seems had no bombs at command and in all the earlier phases of the battle the aeroplanes played no part. Not the smallest cloud was there to break the empty brilliance of the sky. It seemed as though it held itself vacant until the aeroplanes should come.

Ever and again there was news of these, drawing nearer, from this Mediterranean port and then that, and presently from the south of France. But of the new guns that Ostrog had made and which were known to be in the city came no news in spite of Graham's urgency, nor any report of success from the dense felt of fighting strands about the flying stages. Section after section of the Labor Societies reported itself assembled, reported itself marching, and vanished from knowledge into the labyrinth of that warfare. What was happening there? Even the busy ward leaders did not know. In spite of the opening and closing of doors, the hasty messengers, the ringing of bells and the perpetual clatter-clack of recording implements, Graham felt isolated, strangely inactive, inoperative.

Their isolation seemed at times the strangest, the most unexpected of all the things that had happened since his awakening. It had something of the quality of that inactivity that comes in dreams. A tumult, the stupendous realization of a world struggle between Ostrog and himself, and then this confined quiet little room with its mouthpieces and bells and broken mirror!

Now the door would be closed and they were alone together; they seemed sharply marked off then from all the unprecedented world storm that rushed together without, vividly aware of one another, only concerned with one another. Then the door would open again, messengers would enter, or a sharp bell would stab their quiet privacy, and it was like a window in a well built brightly lit house flung open suddenly to a hurricane. The dark hurry and tumult, the stress and vehemence of the battle rushed in and overwhelmed them. They were no longer persons but mere spectators, mere impressions of a tremendous convulsion. They became unreal even to themselves, miniatures of personality, indescribably small, and the two antagonistic realities, the only realities in being were first the city, that throbbed and roared yonder in a belated frenzy of defence and secondly the aeroplanes hurling inexorably towards them over the round shoulder of the world.

At first their mood had been one of exalted confidence, a great pride had possessed them, a pride in one another for the greatness of the issues they had challenged. At first he had walked the room eloquent with a transitory persuasion of his tremendous destiny. But slowly uneasy intimations of their coming defeat touched his spirit. There came a long period in which they were alone. He changed his theme, became egotistical, spoke of the wonder of his sleep, of the little life of his memories, remote yet minute and clear, like something seen through an inverted opera-glass, and all the brief play of desires and errors that had made his former life. She said little, but the emotion in her face followed the tones in his voice, and it seemed to him he had at last a perfect understanding. He reverted from pure reminiscence to that sense of greatness she imposed upon him. "And through it all, this destiny was before me," he said; "this vast inheritance of which I did not dream."

Insensibly their heroic preoccupation with the revolutionary struggle passed to the question of their relationship. He began to question her. She told him of the days before his awakening, spoke with a brief vividness of the girlish dreams that had given a bias to her life, of the incredulous emotions his awakening had aroused. She told him too of a tragic circumstance of her girlhood that had darkened her life, quickened her sense of injustice and opened her heart prematurely to the wider sorrows of the world. For a little time, so far as he was concerned, the great war about them was but the vast ennobling background to these personal things.

In an instant these personal relations were submerged. There came messengers to tell that a great fleet of aeroplanes was rushing between the sky and Avignon. He went to the crystal dial in the corner and assured himself that the thing was so. He went to the chart room and consulted a map to measure the distances of Avignon, New Arawan, and London. He made swift calculations. He went to the room of the Ward Leaders to ask for news of the fight for the stages—and there was no one there. After a time he came back to her.

His face had changed. It had dawned upon him that the struggle was perhaps more than half over, that Ostrog was holding his own, that the arrival of the aeroplanes would mean a panic that might leave him helpless. A chance phrase in the message had given him a glimpse of the reality that came. Each of these soaring giants bore its thousand half-savage negroes to the death grapple of the city. Suddenly his humanitarian enthusiasm showed flimsy. Only two of the Ward Leaders were in their room, when presently he repaired thither; the Hall of Atlas seemed empty. He fancied a change in the bearing of the attendants in the outer rooms. A sombre disillusionment darkened his mind. She looked at him anxiously when he returned to her.

"No news," he said with an assumed carelessness, in answer to her eyes.

Then he was moved to frankness. "Or rather—bad news. We are losing. We are gaining no ground and aeroplanes draw nearer and nearer."

He walked the length of the room and turned.

"Unless we can capture those flying stages in the next hour—there will be horrible things. We shall be beaten."

"No!" she said. "We have justice—we have the people. We have God on our side."

"Ostrog has discipline—he had plans. Do you know, out there just now I felt—. When I heard that these aeroplanes were a stage nearer. I felt as if I were fighting the machinery of fate."

She made no answer for a while. "We have done right," she said at last.

He looked at her doubtfully. "We have done what we could. But does this depend upon us? Is it not an older sin, a wider sin?"

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"These blacks are savages, ruled by force, used as force. And they have been under the rule of the whites two hundred years. Is it not a race quarrel? The race sinned—the race pays."

"But these laborers, these poor people of London—!"

"Vicarious atonement. To stand wrong is to share the guilt."

She looked keenly at him, astonished at the new aspect he presented.

Without came the shrill ringing of a bell, the sound of feet and the gabble of a phonographic message. The man in yellow appeared. "Yes?" said Graham.

"They are at Vichy."

"Where are the attendants who were in the great Hall of the Atlas?" asked Graham abruptly.

Presently the Babble Machine rang again. "We may win yet," said the man in yellow, going out to it. "If only we can find where Ostrog has hidden his guns. Everything hangs on that now. Perhaps this—"

Graham followed him. But the only news was of the aeroplanes. They had reached Orleans.

Graham returned to Helen. "No news," he said. "No news."

"And we can do nothing?"

"Nothing."

HE paced impatiently. Suddenly the swift anger that was his nature swept over him. "Curse this complex world!" he cried, "and all the inventions of men! That a man must die like a rat in a snare and never see his foe! Oh, for one blow! . . ."

He turned with an abrupt change in his manner. "That's nonsense," he said. "I am a savage."

He paced and stopped. "After all, London and Paris are only two cities. All the temperate zone has risen. What if London is doomed and Paris destroyed? These are but accidents." Again came the mockery of news to call him to fresh enquiries. He returned with a graver face and sat down beside her.

"The end must be near," he said. "The people it seems have fought and died in tens of thousands, the ways about Roehampton must be like a smoked beehive. And they have died in vain. They are still only at the sub stage. The aeroplanes are near Paris. Even were a gleam of success to come now, there would be nothing to do, there would be no time to do anything before they were upon us. The guns that might have saved us are mislaid. Mislaid! Think of the disorder of things! Think of this foolish tumult, that cannot even find its weapons! Oh, for one aeropile—just one! For the want of that I am beaten. Humanity is beaten and our cause is lost! My kingship, my headlong foolish kingship will not last a night. And I have egged on the people to fight—"

"They would have fought anyhow."

"I doubt it. I have come among them—"

"No," she cried, "not that. If defeat comes—if you die—. But even that cannot be, it cannot be, after all these years."

"Ah! We have meant well. But—do you indeed believe—?"

"If they defeat you," she cried, "you have spoken. Your word has gone like a great wind through the world, fanning liberty into a flame. What if the flame sputters a little! Nothing can change the spoken word. Your message will have gone forth. . . ."

"To what end? It may be. It may be. You know I said, when you told me of these things—dear God! but that was scarcely a score of hours ago!—I said that I had not your faith. Well—at any rate there is nothing to do now. . . ."

"You have not my faith! Do you mean—? You are sorry?"

"No," he said hurriedly, "no! Before God—no!" His voice changed. "But—. I think—I have been indiscreet. I knew little—I grasped too hastily. . . ."

He paused. He was ashamed of this avowal. "There is one thing that makes up for all. I have known you. Across this gulf of time I have come to you. The rest is done. With you, too, it has been something more—or something less—"

He paused with his face searching hers, and without clamored the unheeded message that the aeroplanes were rising into the sky of Amiens.

She put her hand to her throat, and her lips were white. She stared before her as if she saw some horrible possibility. Suddenly her features changed. "Oh, but I have been honest!" she cried, and then, "Have I been honest? I loved the world and freedom, I hated cruelty and oppression. Surely it was that."

"Yes," he said, "yes. And we have done what it lay in us to do. We have given our message, our message! We have started Armageddon! But now—. Now that we have, it may be our last hour, together, now that all these greater things are done. . . ."

He stopped. She sat in silence. Her face was a white riddle.

For a moment they heeded nothing of a sudden stir outside, a running to and fro, and cries. Then Helen started to an attitude of tense attention. "It is—," she cried and stood up, speechless, incredulous, triumphant. And Graham, too, heard. Metallic voices were shouting "Victory!" Yes it was "Victory!" He stood up also with the light of a desperate hope in his eyes.

Bursting through the curtains appeared the man in yellow, startled and dishevelled with excitement. "Victory," he cried, "victory! The people are winning. Ostrog's people have collapsed."

She rose. "Victory?" And her voice was hoarse and faint.

"What do you mean?" asked Graham. "Tell me! What?"

"We have driven them out of the under galleries at Norwood, Streatham is afire and burning wildly, and Roehampton is ours. Ours!—and we have taken the aeropile that lay thereon."

For an instant Graham and Helen stood in silence, their hearts were beating fast, they looked at one another. For one last moment there gleamed in Graham his dream of empire, of kingship, with Helen by his side. It gleamed, and passed.

A shrill bell rang. An agitated grey-headed man appeared from the room of the Ward Leaders. "It is all over," he cried.

"What matters it now that we have Roehampton? The aeroplanes have been sighted at Boulogne!"

"The Channel!" said the man in yellow. He calculated swiftly. "Half an hour."

"They still have three of the flying stages," said the old man.

"Those guns?" cried Graham.

"We cannot mount them—in half an hour."

"Do you mean they are found?"

"Too late," said the old man.

"If we could stop them another hour!" cried the man in yellow.

"Nothing can stop them now," said the old man. "They have near a hundred aeroplanes in the first fleet."

"Another hour?" asked Graham.

"To be so near!" said the Ward Leader. "Now that we have found those guns. To be so near—. If once we could get them out upon the roof spaces."

"How long would that take?" asked Graham suddenly.

"An hour—certainly."

"Too late," cried the Ward Leader, "too late."

"Is it too late?" said Graham. "Even now—. An hour!"

He had suddenly perceived a possibility. He tried to speak calmly, but his face was white. "There is one chance. You said there was an aeropile—?"

"On the Roehampton stage, Sire."

"Smashed?"

"No. It is lying crossways to the carrier. It might be got upon the guides—easily. But there is no aeronaut—."

Graham glanced at the two men and then at Helen. He spoke after a long pause. "We have no aeronauts?"

"None."

"The aeroplanes are clumsy," he said thoughtfully,

"compared with the aeropiles."

He turned suddenly to Helen. His decision was made. "I must do it."

"Do what?"

"Go to this flying stage—to this aeropile."

"What do you mean?"

"I am an aeronaut. After all—, Those days for which you reproached me were not altogether wasted."

He turned to the old man in yellow. "Tell them to put the aeropile upon the guides."

The man in yellow hesitated.

"What do you mean to do?" cried Helen.

"This aeropile—it is a chance—."

"You don't mean—?"

"To fight—yes. To fight in the air. I have thought before—. An aeroplane is a clumsy thing. A resolute man—!"

"But—never since flying began—" cried the man in yellow.

"There has been no need. But now the time has come. Tell them now—send them my message—to put it upon the guides."

The old man dumbly interrogated the man in yellow, nodded, and hurried out.

Helen made a step towards Graham. Her face was white. "But—How can one fight? You will be killed."

"Perhaps. Yet, not to do it—or to let someone else attempt it—."

He stopped, he could speak no more, he swept the alternative aside by a gesture, and they stood looking at one another.

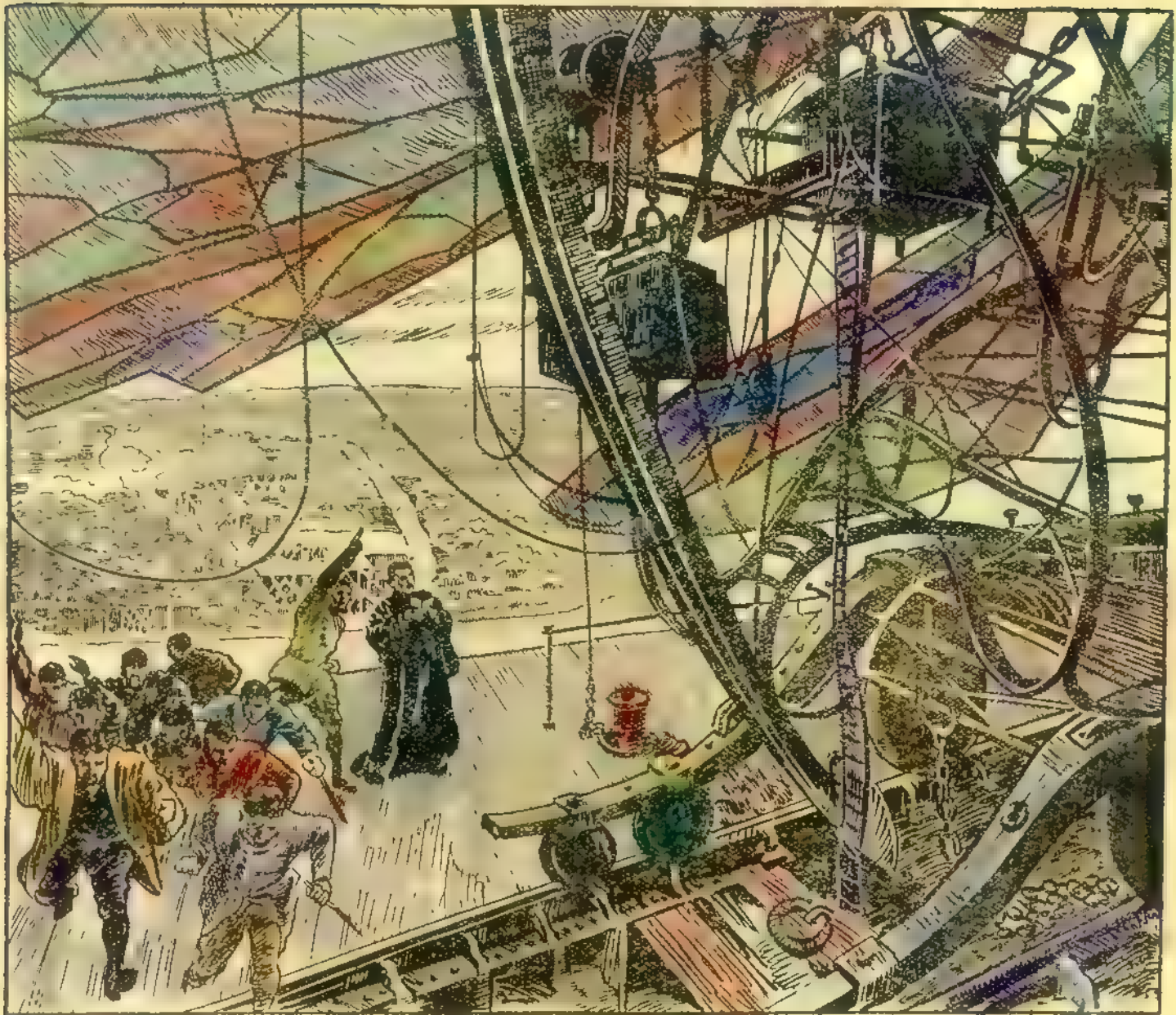
"You are right," she said at last in a low tone. "You are right. If it can be done. . . . You must go."

He moved a step towards her, and she stepped back, her white face struggled against him and resisted him. "No!" she gasped. "I cannot bear—. Go now."

He extended his hands stupidly. She clenched her fists. "Go now," she cried. "Go now."

He hesitated and understood. He threw his hands up in a queer half-theatrical gesture. He had no word to say. He turned from her.

The man in yellow moved towards the door with clumsy belated tact. But Graham stepped past him. He went striding through the room where the Ward Leader bawled



The man in yellow was pointing to the aeroplanes.

at a telephone directing that the aeropile should be put upon the guides.

The man in yellow glanced at Helen's still figure, hesitated and hurried after him. Graham did not once look back, he did not speak until the curtain of the ante-chamber of the great Hall fell behind him. Then he turned his head with curt swift directions upon his bloodless lips.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Coming of the Aeroplanes

TWO men in pale blue were lying in the irregular line that stretched along the edge of the captured Roehampton stage from end to end, grasping their carbines and peering into the shadows of the stage called Wimbledon Park. Now and then they spoke to one another. They spoke the mutilated English of their class and period. The fire of the Ostrogites had dwindled and ceased, and few of the enemy had been seen for some time. But the echoes of the fight that was going on now far below in the lower galleries of that stage, came every now and then between the staccato of shots from the popular side. One of these men was describing to the other how he had seen a man down below there dodge behind a girder, and had aimed at a guess and hit him

cleanly as he dodged too far. "He's down there still," said the marksman. "See that little patch. Yes. Between those bars." A few yards behind them lay a dead stranger, face upward to the sky, with the blue canvas of his jacket smouldering in a circle about the neat bullet hole on his chest. Close beside him a wounded man, with a leg swathed about, sat with an expressionless face and watched the progress of that burning. Gigantic behind them, athwart the carrier lay the captured aeropile.

"I can't see him now," said the second man in a tone of provocation.

The marksman became foul-mouthed and high-voiced in his earnest endeavor to make things plain. And suddenly, interrupting him, came a noisy shouting from the substage.

"What's going on now," he said, and raised himself on one arm to stare at the stairheads in the central groove of the stage. A number of blue figures were coming up these, and swarming across the stage to the aeropile.

"We don't want all these fools," said his friend. "They only crowd up and spoil shots. What are they after?"

"Ssh!—they're shouting something."

The two men listened. The swarming newcomers had crowded densely about the aeropile. Three Ward Lead-

ers, conspicuous by their black mantles and badges, clambered into the body and appeared above it. The rank and file flung themselves upon the vans, gripping hold of the edges, until the entire outline of the thing was manned, in some places three deep. One of the marksmen knelt up. "They're putting it on the carrier—that's what they're after."

He rose to his feet, his friend rose also. "What's the good?" said his friend. "We've got no aeronauts."

"That's what they're doing anyhow." He looked at his rifle, looked at the struggling crowd, and suddenly turning to the wounded man. "Mind these, mate," he said, handing his carbine and cartridge belt; and in a moment he was running towards the aeropile. For a quarter of an hour he was a perspiring Titan, lugging, thrusting, shouting and heeding shouts, and then the thing was done, and he stood with a multitude of others cheering their own achievement. By this time he knew, what indeed everyone in the city knew, that the Master, raw learner though he was, intended to fly this machine himself, was coming even now to take control of it, would let no other man attempt it. "He who takes the greatest danger, he who bears the heaviest burden, that man is King," so the Master was reported to have spoken. And even as this man cheered, and while the beads of sweat still chased one another from the disorder of his hair, he heard the thunder of a greater tumult, and in fitful snatches the beat and impulse of the revolutionary song. He saw through a gap in the people that a thick stream of heads still poured up the stairway. "The Master is coming," shouted voices, "the Master is coming," and the crowd about him grew denser and denser. He began to thrust himself towards the central groove. "The Master is coming!" "The Sleeper, the Master!" "God and the Master!" roared the voices.

And suddenly quite close to him were the black uniforms of the revolutionary guard, and for the first and last time in his life he saw Graham, saw him quite clearly. A tall, dark man in a flowing black robe, with a white, resolute face and eyes fixed steadfastly before him; a man who for all the little things about him had neither ears nor eyes nor thoughts. . . . For all his days that man remembered the passing of Graham's bloodless face. In a moment it had gone and he was fighting in the swaying crowd. A lad weeping with terror thrust against him, pressing toward the stairways, yelling "Clear for the aeropile!" The bell that clears the flying stage became a loud unmelodious clanging.

With that clanging in his ears Graham drew near the aeropile, marched into the shadow of its tilting wing. He became aware that a number of people about him were offering to accompany him, and waved their offers aside. He wanted to think how one started the engine. The bell clanged faster and faster, and the feet of the retreating people roared faster and louder. The man in yellow was assisting him to mount through the ribs of the body. He clambered into the aeronaut's place, fixing himself very carefully and deliberately. What was it? The man in yellow was pointing to two aeropiles driving upward in the southern sky. No doubt they were looking for the coming aeroplanes. That—presently—the thing to do now was to start. Things were being shouted at him, questions, warnings. They bother him. He wanted to think about the aeropile, to recall every item of his previous experience. He waved the people from him, saw the man in yellow dropping off through the ribs, saw the crowd cleft down the line of the girders by his gesture.

For a moment he was motionless, staring at the levers, the wheel by which the engine shifted, and all the delicate appliances of which he knew so little. His eye caught a spirit level with the bubble towards him, and he remembered something, spent a dozen seconds in swinging the engine forward until the bubble floated in

the centre of the tube. He noted that the people were not shouting, knew they watched his deliberation. A bullet smashed on the bar above his head. Who fired? Was the line clear of people? He stood up to see and sat down again.

IN another second the propeller was spinning, and he was rushing down the guides. He gripped the wheel and swung the engine back to lift the stem. Then it was the people shouted. In a moment he was throbbing with the quiver of the engine, and the shouts dwindled swiftly behind, rushed down to silence. The wind whistled over the edges of the screen, and the world sank away from him very swiftly.

Throb, throb, throb—throb, throb, throb; up he drove. He fancied himself free of all excitement, felt cool and deliberate. He lifted the stem still more, opened one valve on his left wing and swept round and up. He looked down with a steady head, and up. One of the Ostrogite aeropiles was driving across his course, so that he drove obliquely towards it and would pass below it at a steep angle. Its little aeronauts were peering down at him. What did they mean to do? His mind became active. One, he saw held a weapon pointing, seemed prepared to fire. What did they think he meant to do? In a moment he understood their tactics, and his resolution was taken. His momentary lethargy was past. He opened two more valves to his left, swung round, end on to this hostile machine, closed his valves, and shot straight at it, stem and wind-screening shielding him from the shot. They tilted a little as if to clear him. He flung up his stem.

Throb, throb, throb—pause—throb, throb—he set his teeth, his face into an involuntary grimace, and crash! He struck it! He struck upward beneath the nearer wing.

Very slowly the wing of his antagonist seemed to broaden as the impetus of his blow turned it up. He saw the full breadth of it and then it slid downward out of his sight.

He felt his stem going down, his hands tightened on the levers, whirled and rammed the engine back. He felt the jerk of a clearance, the nose of the machine jerked up steeply, and for a moment he seemed to be lying on his back. The machine was reeling and stag-



The destruction of the aeropile.

gering, it seemed to be dancing on its screw. He made a huge effort, hung for a moment on the levers, and slowly the engine came forward again. He was driving upward but no longer so steeply. He gasped for a moment and flung himself at the levers again. The wind whistled about him. One further effort and he was almost level. He could breathe. He turned his head for the first time to see what had become of his antagonists. Turned back to the levers for a moment and looked again. For a moment he could have believed they were annihilated. And then he saw between the two stages to the east was a chasm, and down this something, a slender edge, fell swiftly and vanished, as a sixpence falls down a crack.

At first he did not understand, and then a wild joy possessed him. He shouted at the top of his voice, an inarticulate shout, and drove higher and higher up the sky. Throb, throb, throb, pause, throb, throb, throb. "Where was the other aeropile?" he thought. "They, too—." As he looked round the empty heavens he had a momentary fear that this machine had risen above him, and then he saw it alighting on the Norwood stage. They had meant shooting. To risk being rammed head-long two thousand feet in the air was beyond their latter-day courage. The combat was declined.

For a little while he circled, then swooped in a steep descent towards the westward stage. Throb, throb, throb, throb, throb, throb. The twilight was creeping on apace, the smoke from the Streatham stage that had been so dense and dark, was now a pillar of fire, and all the laced curves of the moving ways and the translucent rooms and domes and the chasms between the buildings were glowing softly now, lit by the tempered radiance of the electric light that the glare of the day overpowered. The three efficient stages that the Ostrogites held—for Wimbledon Park was useless because of the fire from Roehampton, and Streatham was a furnace—were glowing with guide lights for the coming aeroplanes. As he swept over the Roehampton stage he saw the dark masses of the people thereon. He heard a clap of frantic cheering, heard a bullet from the Wimbledon Park stage tweet through the air, and went beating up above the Surrey wastes. He felt a breath of wind from the south-west, and lifted his westward wing as he had learned to do, and so drove upward heeling into the rare swift upper air. Throb, throb, throb—throb, throb, throb.

Up he drove and up, to that pulsating rhythm, until the country beneath was blue and indistinct, and London spread like a little map traced in light, like the mere model of a city near the brim of the horizon. The south-west was a sky of sapphire over the shadowy rim of the world, and ever as he drove upwards the multitude of stars increased.

And behold! In the southward, low down and glittering swiftly nearer, were two little patches of nebulous light. And then two more, and then a nebulous glow of swiftly driving shapes. Presently he could count them. There were four and twenty. The first fleet of aeroplanes had come! Beyond appeared a yet greater glow.

He swept round in a half circle, staring at this advancing fleet. It flew in a wedge-like shape, a triangular flight of gigantic phosphorescent shapes sweeping nearer through the lower air. He made a swift calculation of their pace, and spun the little wheel that brought the engine forward. He touched a lever and the throbbing effort of the engine ceased. He began to fall, fell swifter and swifter. He aimed at the apex of the wedge. He dropped like a stone through the whistling air. It seemed scarce a second from that soaring moment before he struck the foremost aeroplane.

No man of all that black multitude saw the coming of his fate, no man among them dreamt of the hawk that struck downward upon him out of the sky. Those who were not limp in the agonies of air-sickness, were

craning their black necks and staring to see the filmy city that was rising out of the haze, the rich and splendid city to which "Massa Boss" had brought their obedient muscles. Bright teeth gleamed and the glossy faces shone. They had heard of Paris. They knew they were to have lordly times among the "poor white" trash. And suddenly Graham struck them.

He had aimed at the body of the aeroplane, but at the very last instant a better idea had flashed into his mind. He twisted about and struck near the edge of the starboard wing with all his accumulated weight. He was jerked back as he struck. His prow went gliding across its smooth expanse towards the rim. He felt the forward rush of the huge fabric sweeping him and his aeropile along with it, and for a moment that seemed an age he could not tell what was happening. He heard a thousand throats yelling, and perceived that his machine was balanced on the edge of the gigantic float, and driving down, down; glanced over his shoulder and saw the backbone of the aeroplane and the opposite float swaying up. He had a vision through the ribs of sliding chairs, staring faces, and hands clutching at the tilting guide bars. The fenestrations in the further float flashed open as the aeronaut tried to right her. Beyond he saw a second aeroplane leaping steeply to escape the whirl of its heeling fellow. The broad area of swaying wings seemed to jerk upward. He felt his aeropile had dropped clear, that the monstrous fabric, clean overturned, hung like a sloping wall above him.

He did not clearly understand that he had struck the side float of the aeroplane and slipped off, but he perceived that he was flying free on the down glide and rapidly nearing earth. What had he done? His heart throbbed like a noisy engine in this throat and for a perilous instant he could not move his levers because of the paralysis of his hands. He wrenched the levers to throw his engine back, fought for two seconds against the weight of it, felt himself righting, driving horizontally, set the engine beating again.

HE looked upward and saw two aeroplanes glide shouting far overhead, looked back, and saw the main body of the fleet opening out and rushing upward and outward; saw the one he had struck fall edgewise on and strike like a gigantic knife-blade along the wind-wheels below it.

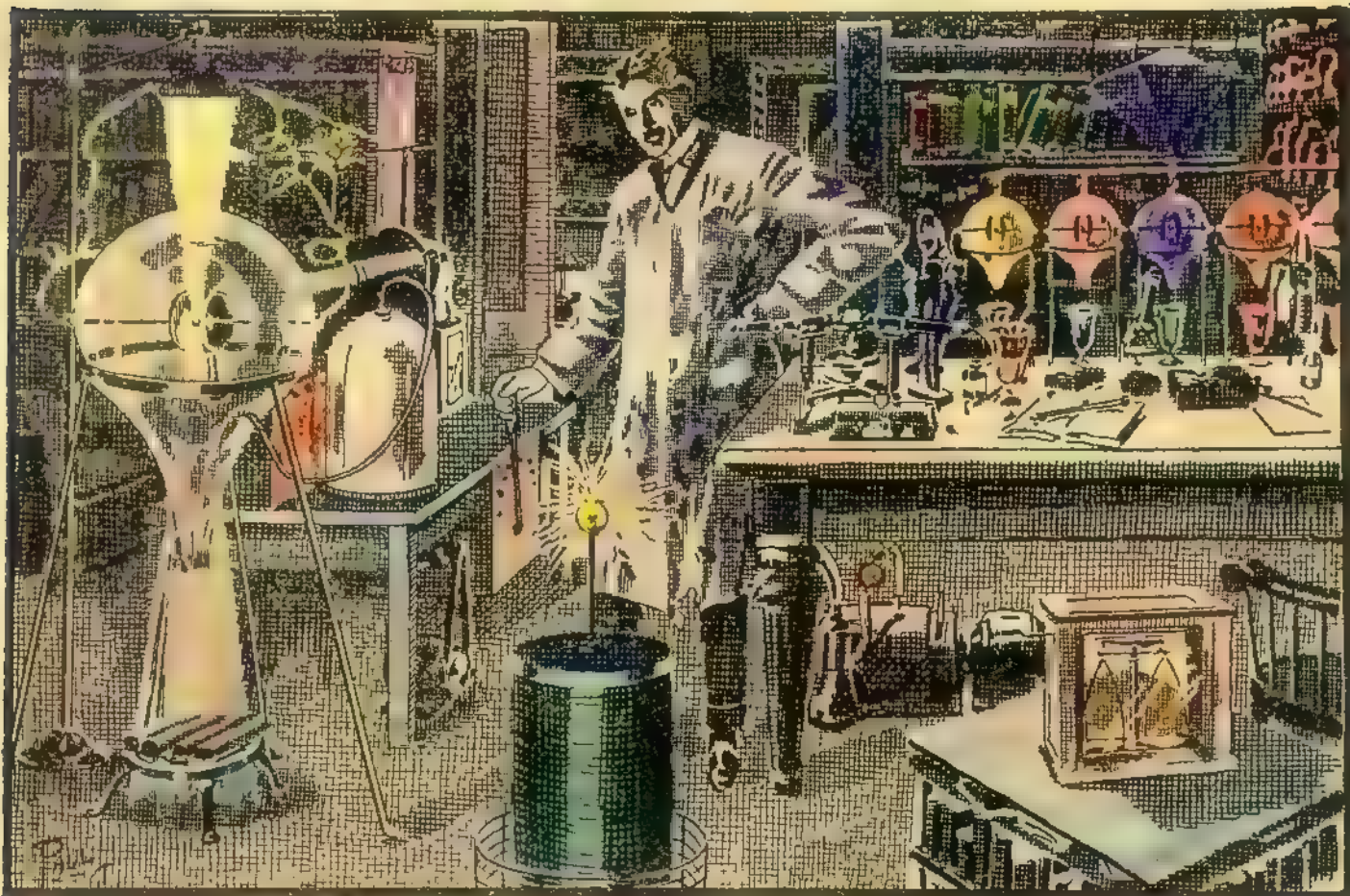
He put down his stern and looked again. He drove up heedless of his direction as he watched. He saw the wind-vanes give, saw the huge fabric strike the earth, saw its downward vans crumple with the weight of its descent, and then the whole mass turned over and smashed upside down, upon the sloping wheels. Throb, throb, throb, pause. Suddenly from the heaving wreckage a thin tongue of white fire licked up toward the zenith. And then he was aware of a huge mass flying through the air towards him, and turned upwards just in time to escape the charge—if it was a charge—of a second aeroplane. It whirled by below, sucked him down a fathom, and nearly turned him over in the gust of its close passage.

He became aware of three others rushing towards him, aware of the urgent necessity of beating above them. Aeroplanes were all about him, circling wildly to avoid him, as it seemed. They drove past him, above, below, eastward and westward. Far away to the westward was the sound of a collision, and two falling flares. Far to the southward a second squadron was coming. Steadily he beat upward. Presently all the aeroplanes were below him, but for a moment he doubted the height he had of them, and did not swoop again. And then he came down upon a second victim and all its load of soldiers saw him coming. The big machine heeled and swayed as the fear-maddened men scrambled to the stern for their weapons. A score of bullets sung through the

(Concluded on page 136)

The GOLDEN VAPOR

by E. H. Johnson



" . . . Slowly Dr. Grieg turned the great 'Medior' bulb first one way and then another, and finally he clamped it pointing directly downward. After opening one of the inlet cocks, so as to let a little of the gray powder down into the first 'Materializer' bulb he watched it intently for a long time. Suddenly he stopped sweeping the rays, and for a moment he seemed as one stupefied. The iron bars on which the downward rays were playing slowly seemed to 'dematerialize'—nay, vanish—into thin air! The iron bars had disappeared and in the glass bulb the 'Golden Vapors' had condensed into a fine powder—and it was distinctly yellow!"



IN the fourth of December, 1919, the home-going crowds on the streets of San Francisco, like those in any other great city, were busy with their own thoughts. The louder noises of the day had ceased, and with the gradual peering forth of the myriad lights with which, like jewels, the fair queen was wont to adorn herself for an evening at home—a sense of calm security warmed the hearts of old and young alike. Comparative peace reigned on earth, and in the heavens above shone forth stars as yellow as the gold of California itself—and no more illusive. One alone of all the hurrying throng saw little of charm in that color. Though as thoroughly conscious as any other of his own safety this conviction was of a defiant type which finds its assurance in the knowledge of successful craftiness and fears little because little is loved. Occasionally he smiled grimly, almost cynically, as some ostensibly rich person swept by,

or as he caught the faint odor of some rare perfume. These were but pretenses to a satisfaction that he had little faith in. They proclaimed a comfort which he thought at best to be but an illusion. Yet, humanlike, he could not help wondering, for such a life was now well within his reach, but he only buttoned his coat a bit tighter about his meager form, glimpsing furtively, though perhaps unknowingly at the darkened doorways and the starless patches overhead. This strange appearing man was Dr. Rudolph Grieg, a doctor of philosophy, not of medicine and surgery.

Suddenly, familiar shouts filled the air as a half-dozen newsboys burst forth from a nearby building—a towering structure whose lower levels were

teeming with chattering machines and dodging human attendants. The evening edition of a great paper was just emerging with its tales of a thousand horrors and frivolities which, regardless of variety, length or sense, were

THIS is the story of a man possessed of the highest type of scientific training, and who, because of disappointments that had come into his life, used his highly developed talents to plan and carry to a successful conclusion an enterprise mystifying to an extent unequalled in the annals of modern crime.

soon to beguile the fireside hours in a thousand homes. With the usual jargon, each boy tried to drown the advertising efforts of his fellows, so that however attentive a listener might be, he could only conclude that the day's events were not much different from those of other days. And each night, regardless of the nature of these announcements, each boy disposed of his wares before the "next car" with its strap-holders, swaying and reading, oblivious of their promiscuous human contacts in their absorption in greater or lesser human affairs—rushed away beyond the twinkling lights in the heart of the city.

Of all this crowd, Dr. Grieg alone seemed in no haste to depart. His keen ears had caught a word in the howling clamor of the newsboys and then with all his heightened sensibilities alert he had heard enough to cause him to do a thing which for him had become quite uncommon—to buy a paper. He had fairly snatched it from a boy who was running past, had cast a quarter in his direction and turned to a lighted window to scan the headlines with an evident excitement. The boy looked several times at the quarter he had received, started to speak once or twice, but then seeing that his customer seemed satisfied, raced on.

Then with scarcely a glance about Dr. Grieg hurried on into the darker streets toward the edge of the city, where he might have been followed far into the night, walking, walking on and on with the apparent aimlessness of one who has a deal of time to spend and does not find the pastime disagreeable. And yet, if his course was aimless, no one would have described his physical appearance in such terms. First, with his hands deep in his pockets, he hurried along as if in haste from some dreaded pursuer. Then, and apparently without any forethought, he stopped under a lamp, pulled out his lately acquired paper, read and re-read something in it, and finally with all the appearance of one who enjoys the contemplation of a master joke that he has engineered, he thrust it once more deep within his pocket, seized his coat by the lapels, pulled himself up, and chuckled,—actually chuckled, though a careful examination of another paper identical with the one he carried, failed to reveal the slightest cause for such behavior.

Then slowly he wandered on through the higher residence portions of the city, occasionally whistling in a rambling way,—aimlessly it seemed, even like his own wandering. But the frequent repetition of a few notes suggested the unconscious echoing of some song of other days. They were, however, unheeded by the few who were still awake, save one, an old night watchman, in whom the peculiar strains had suddenly awakened strange memories. He seemed to be once more leaning from the little window in his father's house in a land once dear to him, but which he had come to regard as no longer first in his affections, now that he was an American. With each repetition of those haunting strains he could almost hear the tramp, tramp of the gay *Studenten* as they sang late into the night. There was no mistaking it, and for the first time in a score of years the words came back to him:

*"Alt Heidelberg, du feine,
Du Stadt an Ehren reich,
Am Neckar und am Rheine
Keine andre kommet dir gleich."*

No mistake! Old Heidelberg; even the lilt at the end of each line had been common to the students in old Heidelberg. Who ever it was that thus whistled away the midnight hours, he was either a native of Germany or one of those Americans who had long studied there. And in spite of his recent feeling of shame because of his own nationality, the old man hastened on around

the corner hoping to meet this possible friend, only to see a distant figure vanish into a side street, to be lost entirely as the whistling ceased.

Thus it was that Grieg had wandered about the city—Doctor Grieg, the man with an enviable past and before whom lay limitless opportunity for aiding or upsetting much of the social organization of the years ahead.

As a boy he had grown up in that much disputed and undoubtedly desirable country bearing the poetic name of *Alsace-Lorraine*. Early he had been sent to both the *Realschule* and the Gymnasium, and later by some forgotten bit of fortune had been able to go to Heidelberg, Bonn and Berlin. Here he had studied under some of the greatest of living scientists, Helmholtz among the rest, and he had not only shown unusual ability in mastering the deep mysteries of chemistry and physics, but had on several occasions given evidence of the possession of no common power of insight into natural phenomena. Deep electrical problems had been his chief delight, and it was even suggested that had he cared for notoriety he might have anticipated the great Heinrich Hertz in announcing some of the facts which the latter discovered concerning electromagnetic waves. In 1893 and the years following, he had been back and forth between Paris and some of the German universities where was going on the feverish work immediately preceding the world-stirring announcements of Becquerel and Roentgen. He had followed closely some of the earliest work of the Curies in their epoch-making isolation of radioactive substances, and, at the time (1896-7) when Perrin was trying to generate electric currents by means of the Roentgen rays, Dr. Grieg was not only frequently in London attending meetings of the English scientific societies, but had given a series of lectures before the Philosophical Society of Cambridge on the "Electrical Nature of Matter." These papers, preserved in the transactions of the society, show now perhaps more clearly than they did then the wonderful perspicacity of the man. In a manner worthy of Faraday or Maxwell, he had predicted certain phenomena—or their absence—to be upheld by the work of other investigators a decade later. Especially had he been interested in all electrical experiments conducted in a vacuum, as he was watching for every possible verification of his early theory that any form of matter in a sufficiently divided elementary form—atoms or their subdivisions—might be transported by electrical forces, like the ray particles investigated by Becquerel and Crookes. Though this suggestion seemed radically visionary the experience of the scientific world between 1895 and 1900 had taught it to reserve judgment. Only after a certain familiarity with the newer rays and radiations had been acquired did men of science once more venture to make dogmatic statements relative to possible natural phenomena. Then they had condemned Grieg as a notoriety seeker, and owing to the fact that at that time he was not holding any high academic position, he had little recourse in his adversity. But his resolve to prove his point doubled from that time on. It became the dominating passion of his life to show that his critics were wrong. To strengthen his own conviction further work was unnecessary. He would yet demonstrate to the world a transformation more wonderful than any for which the philosopher's stone had ever been sought.

Then it was about 1902, that he turned to America. Hurt but far from crushed, he resolved to leave the blind leaders of the old world, and come to the land of golden opportunity. As his controversies in Europe had been largely over matters of opinion, his distinction in this country was scarcely, if at all, diminished, and he was immediately offered a chair of electrochemistry in several of the eastern universities. But after a few special lectures before some of the scientific societies in the eastern

states, he continued his journey westward, finally to settle down in the sun-kist city of San Francisco. Here the western spirit of youthful enthusiasm inspired him as nothing else had since his student days in Bonn. He found everyone ready to accept a newcomer at his apparent worth with no questions about the past, and requiring no promise for the future.

He now rented a few rooms, gathered his books about him and began a period of study and experimentation more intense, if possible, than any of his earlier years. Aside from the postman with his armful of scientific journals and letters from foreign savants he had no visitors; no one knew anything of his order of life. Days and nights lost all distinction for him. Rest came only when sorely needed and with no relation whatever to the time of day or the custom of those about him. He lived as in a prison, glad that its doors locked out the entire world of possible disturbers.

DURING the years that followed Dr. Grieg gradually felt his way along the path of which he had dreamed while yet a student. Every fact, every relation between the phenomena of molecular physics, brought him nearer his desired goal. While a mere boy he had read with wild interest of the ancient experiments in which water inclosed in gold and silver spheres had been made to actually pass through the pores of the metal when subjected to sufficient pressure. Why might not the same thing be accomplished by some other force than a mechanical one,—by an electric or a magnetic force, for instance? He had also followed the well-known experiments on the diffusion of metals, in which molecules of gold and lead had mixed when blocks of the pure substances had been kept in close contact for a long time. Here the materials, in small portions to be sure, had migrated under some influence broadly classified under molecular forces. Were these too not electrical? Could they not be controlled artificially?

Then later there were the remarkable experiments of Bridgman, in this country, and Adams and others in England, which had shown that the ordinary characterizing properties of all substances disappear or change radically when suitable forces are applied to them. He had seen the rock specimens produced by Adams, proving that solid, cold granite could be made to change its form and flow by the mere application of sufficient pressure. He had studied Bridgman's data showing that liquids may behave as solids, and vice versa, if confined and subjected to forces of great enough magnitude. And many of their other physical properties were changed to such an extent as to afford a new field of knowledge.

All of this came to Grieg as welcome support for his theories. Each discovery by another enabled him to shorten his own methods for arriving at his goal. He recalled the famous experiments on electricity and the ether, by Sir Oliver Lodge and others, and the later theories about electrons filled him with ecstasies of joy. Other investigators as well as himself were finding out that atoms of matter when in vibration at a sufficiently high rate, had some effect on the ether of space; they actually sent out waves, and in some cases they themselves disappeared as if borne away on the rays of energy they had emitted—radiations actually affecting certain electrical instruments. Soon it was found that as these electrical properties of matter were made to increase many of the other ordinary "substance" characteristics diminished or disappeared entirely. The identity of some of the "rays" from radio-active substances and atoms of helium had long been suspected, and it only remained to produce such a separation and transfer of matter artificially to overcome the great difficulty which was temporarily threatening all of Dr. Grieg's hopes. He

must make atoms,—atoms of helium, for instance, do some of the things that the alpha-particles of radium had been shown to do. Perhaps it might be possible to do even more.

Of the experimental details involved in this attempt little can be told. Naturally the apparatus used was complex and delicate. Dr. Grieg's rooms had gradually taken on the confused appearance of living room, library and laboratory. In the larger room of the three which now constituted this "little kingdom," was a long table covered high with a mysterious conglomeration of instruments, glass tubes, bulbs of quartz and other substances, an electrically driven vacuum pump, and a MacLeod gage for showing the exact degree of vacuum obtained. There were also wires, switches, rheostats and electrical meters in great numbers, a hopeless mix-up to the uninitiated, but to the master—to Grieg—all was undoubtedly in precise order, in pleasingly fine adjustment—a thing alive, a creature of promise!

Of this mass of equipment several portions were conspicuous beyond the rest. Mounted near the center of the table was a semi-transparent globe, apparently of glass and tinted faintly to a lemon-yellow color. From above, it was joined by a tube to the gage and pump, and below it tapered to a neck provided with a glass stop-cock. On opposite sides entered two wires which seemed to terminate in small concave metal reflectors not unlike the cathodes in early forms of X-ray tubes. These two were identical and seemed as if curved to focus at a common point midway between them. A close observer would have noticed at this focal point a small bright metal bead, mounted on the end of a fine wire coming from another electrode in the rear wall of the bulb. Externally, these were all connected by wires to the electrical instruments with which the table and the space beneath it was largely filled.

Not far away was a second bulb of about the same size as the former, but containing a large concave mirror of very peculiar appearance. At first sight it would have been taken for metal, like the smaller ones, but closer inspection showed it to be at the same time somewhat of a glassy nature, almost transparent when viewed directly from in front. At its focus were the ends of several tiny wires bearing small frames at once suggestive of the grid arrangement in some of the *vacuum detectors* used in wireless telegraphy. This bulb was not connected to the air pump, but apparently sealed permanently, and supported in such a manner that it could be rotated to face in any direction. Dr. Grieg called the latter bulb the *Medior*, and the other one the *Materializer*. In them lay the secret of his entire work, the result of his years of study, and they were at one and the same time weapons and tools for possible good of previously undreamed of potency.

Long ago he had seen enough of the realization of his dreams to work on in feverish haste. Although a little thought would have shown that his secret was safe, even had his rooms been open to every one, he lived in a constant tremor of fear, lest his new-found power should slip into the hands of others. Calmly thoughtful by nature, he at times lost all self-control at the very thought of an outsider within his sanctum. And this fear grew day by day until reasons began to formulate themselves in his mind for leaving the house he had come to regard almost as his own, and find other quarters, where there might be no curious landlady, where walls were not so thin, where fire risk would be less, facilities better, and so on, until, as he surveyed the array he saw clearly that there was no course left him but to move, and the sooner the better.

So it came about that before long a dray load of huge boxes and crates was moved into one of the rear rooms on the second floor of a down-town office building. Grieg

had reasoned rightly, that seclusion was more certain in the heart of the city than where people's thoughts were less occupied. Here he had a spacious room, only one to be sure, and one having but two windows high up so as to afford only a view of a few square feet of brick wall a few feet away. But these and other factors were great sources of gratification to the new occupant, and the least of the several reasons for this was that the rent was far lower than it would have been for any other similar space. And the walls were of solid brick and masonry, two feet thick if an inch,—and the floor was of concrete. What more could he wish for? Greater security and isolation could scarcely have been provided by a lonely island in Polynesia.

Now it was that the work began in earnest. Dr. Grieg had some months earlier succeeded in transmitting helium from one bulb to another several feet distant by means of his electrical rays. And the method had been surprisingly simple after all of the superfluous details in the apparatus had been eliminated. At first the flask containing the helium had been placed in the path of a powerful beam of ultra-violet rays and the *Medior* bulb immediately in front of it in the same rays. Then, when the proper pressures were obtained in the two containers, he had succeeded in showing by means of the spectroscope that the space within the *Medior* contained a small percentage of helium, whereas before the exposure it had contained absolutely none.

From that time on the developments were of the nature of slight adjustments and improvements rather than fundamental inventions. He now had the embryo of the creation which he fully believed could be made to grow to almost any proportions if properly studied and assisted. Before his mind's eye lay a changing universe, its laws upset, and all human notions of its stability and fixity set at naught. If helium, for example, could be thus called by him from one closed vessel and made to appear within another, when there was no apparent physical connection or functioning medium between them, why might not his command be extended to all other elements as well?

One evening while sitting far into the night and gazing at his beloved bulbs as he had often done before, but now as one hypnotized and immovable for the first time in many hours, he gradually lost all sense of time and space in contemplating a widening vision that built itself up and up before him. His cheeks became flushed and an unwonted fire glowed in the depths of his half-closed eyes and, drunk with the dream as well as exhausted, he fell asleep and dreamed on.

Hour after hour his little clock ticked away the seconds and the little motor that drove the air-pump purred on so contentedly that one would scarcely have dreamed that its song was one of ceaseless labor and faithfulness. Perhaps it knew the importance of its task, and who shall say that the little old clock did not philosophize deeply before ticking off another second, knowing that no power could bring it back.

Suddenly Grieg awoke. He seemed at first startled, as if surprised in some secret business, and then recognizing his whereabouts, he almost laughed aloud. Undoubtedly he would have done so had not his habit of secrecy and quietness become quite fixed. But he did laugh a little, and for a long time, as he walked about the room with his hands behind his back, he seemed to be reviewing some pleasant scene. He would stop occasionally and caress some queer-looking piece of apparatus, or perhaps he would speak to some other mysterious contrivance, all the time with the bearing of one who was both a general marshalling his troops for a glorious assault and a dear friend. His brief ejaculations were of the nature of assurances, of promises, of congratulations.

That night, or rather morning, Grieg thought no more

of sleep. For a time he pored over the books which were scattered about the room,—the most of them open to some reference of immediate interest. Then he renewed his experimental work. For days he scarcely seemed to pause for a moment. When or where he ate is not known. Had he not actually slept amid his apparatus on that other night he might have been credited with perpetual sleeplessness, among his other powers. But through it all, something seemed to buoy him up, to renew his vigor and instill youth into his veins.

It has long been known that when under the influence of the force of electric currents of sufficiently high frequencies and high potentials, practically all substances act as conductors. This fact had been made use of by Grieg in making the *Medior*. Now he constructed strange transformers for increasing these qualities as far as possible. Huge coils, like those of Telsa and Oudin, were built into the apparatus already filling a large portion of the room. Devices for producing ultra-violet light in powerful beams were added, and mercury vapor lamps replaced the ordinary electric lamps in the ceiling. This was because he had always found his experiments to succeed best in the presence of these radiations of short wavelength.

Such was his success that he was soon able to transfer some of the heavier gases from one bulb to another, just as he had first done with the helium. Then came metallic vapors, the lighter ones first, and finally that of mercury,—all of course, initially inclosed in a sealed bulb free from the presence of other substances and made to reappear in the *Medior*. But the latter, for the reasons which had led him to so name it, was never intended to be the final receiver; it was to be but the *medium*, the agency to affect the transformation of what it received from an ether wave energy form to that of a particular electric current. This, in turn, was to be further transformed into its characteristic matter form by the *Materializer*. However, the difficulties involved when this step was attempted under any but ideal conditions, had made the *Materializer* hitherto of little more than theoretical usefulness. And then in a brief moment he had found that the interposition of suitable condensers between the two bulbs solved the problem completely. When in operation the faintly luminous rays in the *Materializer* brought the tiny metallic bead to a bright incandescence, and a vapor soon appeared around it, condensing and forming on the sides of the bulb as an impalpable powder or sometimes as a liquid, which could be drawn off by means of the stop-cock below.

The principal steps in the process were as follows: A bulb containing, say mercury vapor, was set in the path of a beam of ultra-violet light which in turn also passed to the *Medior*, though the latter was possibly some feet away. (Absorption of these radiations by the air and other media had been obviated by giving the waves themselves a suitable form.) The grid in the *Medior* was then heated by an auxiliary electric current from a small storage battery, and the entire bulb was oriented so that its concave mirror faced the beam of ultra-violet rays. Then the high-frequency, high-potential apparatus was started and as soon as the condensers were adjusted to the proper capacities, the tiny sphere at the focus of the mirrors of the *Materializer* would begin to glow,—a bluish vapor would surround it and soon minute globules of metallic mercury would begin to roll down the sides of the bulb and could be drawn into a beaker below.

However, some limitations still remained that he saw must be removed before his great dream could be entirely realized. Among them was the fact that the substance to be transferred by this method must begin its transformation in a hermetically sealed flask, entirely freed from the presence of even the slightest trace of any other substance. Then again, he had been able to

make the transfer only when the active beam of ultraviolet rays was approximately at right angles to the direction of the earth's gravitational force. On this latter subject he had thought almost constantly, and had even written a lengthy paper—"On the Relation of Electronic Path to the Direction of the Gravitational Vector"—with the notion of reading it at the approaching meeting of the *American Physical Society* in San Francisco. But the first thought of his earlier treatment at the hands of those other scientific societies in Europe caused him to tear it up and burn the strips slowly over a Bunsen burner, smiling as he watched the glow of the ink on the falling flakes of ash, as if the joke were on others and not on himself.

The work of Mosely, the Braggs and others opened up a new avenue for attacking the problem which now excluded all other thoughts. It had been found that the X-rays excite secondary X-rays by the molecular agitations of the substances through which they pass, and that these new rays possess characteristics relating them to the emitting substances. Their directions were also different from those of the primary rays which had excited them, so that they seemed at first to be only the same radiations after reflection.

Beginning with these facts Grieg was soon able to reverse the action of his *Materializer* and *Medior* so that a vapor or finely divided solid which had been inserted into the former might be de-materialized and transmitted to a distant place, and there re-materialized by the same sort of apparatus used as a receiver.

Then came another great discovery. If the flask which was to act as the receiver already contained a substance in a similar form (that is, solid or vapor) to the substance in the transmitting bulb, but of greater molecular weight, the mere impinging of the charged violet rays on this substance set up molecular agitations resulting not only in the automatic materialization of the substance sought, but also in the emission of secondary rays in exactly the opposite direction, and these in turn bore back in pure energy form, portions of the denser material. Thus a single transmitter became both a de-materializer and a materializer, a sender and a receiver!

The experiment was tried out repeatedly. For example, equal masses of tin and lead had thus been exchanged, and the only characteristic difference in the appearance of the sending bulb was that while acting at the same time as a receiver, its vapors were in violent tumult. This motion ceased only when one or both of the substances had been completely transferred. Still further refinements had then enabled Grieg to make the exchange in any direction and thus the gravitational factor which had long been a stumbling block was eliminated.

Following this last success and for the first time in months, he seemed to move leisurely. Deliberately he would wander about his room with the air of one who knows that his plans have not miscarried, and who sees his final triumph easily within his reach. The battle was won; he had but to accept the victory! The fact that he was meditating on what society would call a grave crime, scarcely entered his mind. When it did he only smiled cynically, as always, in the consciousness of his own security. Though he should not be classed as a moral pervert, or one naturally bad, he was perhaps now little better, for he had lost all of his former feeling of moral and social responsibility. Human laws and customs mattered to him not at all. The experiment should be tried come what might. It would in itself be his life's triumph, his triumph over his old critics, the supreme proof of the fallacy of human notions of security. And of the more material reward which would accompany it, well, that was secondary; but after all it

would be pleasant to rest and in what way more enjoyably than to wander leisurely up and down the length and breadth of his native Alsace-Lorraine and visit again the scenes of his student days—when the means were available?

* * *

THUS the days went by. The first day of November had arrived and nearly passed. Grieg, who had just eaten a good meal at a nearby restaurant, was now strolling aimlessly along the streets and thinking for the most part of mere trivialities, but never for one moment losing sight of the fact that tonight he was to carry out an experiment more wonderful than any dreamed of by the alchemists. Tonight should witness an enterprise that would at once distance all other human endeavors and baffle the keenest of sleuths.

As a distant clock chimed the hour of nine, he turned back to his room. At once his step took on the alertness of one who has made a decision. There was work to be done and done now. Once more he was the keen scientific investigator. Every sensibility was alert, and the training of a lifetime showed itself in every movement.

On entering his room he switched on a small, blue light, glanced around and at once seated himself before the apparatus on the huge table in the center. The pump had been running uninterruptedly for days and the gage showed that every joint was tight. A tiny pilot light here and there told that all wires were intact and ready for their task. In place of the single *Materializer* bulb that had been seen previously, there was now a row of such bulbs, six of them, each larger than the original one, and they were all connected to the pump and so arranged that each could be switched into circuit instantaneously. Above them was a large glass funnel or hopper filled with a bluish-gray metallic appearing powder. From this ran a large tube which in turn branched out so as to enter the top of each of the *Materializer* bulbs, and admit the powder to any one of them on opening the proper stopcock. Beneath each of these bulbs was the usual large beaker. No receiver was visible. It had ceased to be necessary soon after Grieg had succeeded in using the secondary radiations as a returning agency. Evidently the experiment was to take some form not hitherto seen.

With a last glance over the apparatus, he slowly closed the master switch which made the whole assembly of mechanism become a thing of potentialities. Then one by one, smaller switches were also closed, until from the slight hum and glow of the various contrivances one would judge that all was in working order, set for the attack, whatever it might be.

Slowly Grieg turned the great *Medior* bulb first one way and then another and finally he clamped it pointing directly downwards. After opening one of the inlet cocks so as to let a little of the gray powder filter down into the first *Materializer*, he watched it intently for a long time. The focus glowed and then the usual vapors appeared, velvety and blue and hovering quiescent like a spirit soon to vanish. Then he examined the luminous region with a spectroscope, but soon he set it aside, shook his head in a worried manner, and directed his attention once more to the powerful *Medior*. Apparently some adjustment was incomplete. Beginning as before, he swung the great globe one way and another as one might guide a searchlight in exploring a distant hillside. Always he kept it pointing in a general downward direction, while the *Medior* rays played upon some iron bars, and always he watched the glowing haze in the *Materializer*. From time to time it seemed to show slight tremors, but nothing of the violent nature he was seeking. Then he

swung it through a wider angle sweeping out larger and larger circles with its axis, and all the while watching intently the tell-tale glow at his side.

Suddenly he stopped. For a moment he seemed as one stupefied. The iron bars on which the downward rays were playing slowly seemed to "dematerialize," nay, vanish into the thin air! Then he leaped to the spectro-scope, directed it toward the boiling vapors in the globe before him, and sat for a time as if hypnotized—held by some strange sight.

As soon as he moved slightly, it was apparent that his excitement was very high. His breathing came short and fast. And then with what seemed almost a shudder, he sank back in his chair, buried his face in his hands, and remained silent for a long time. When again he looked up, his eyes and hands were wet. New lines in his face told how great had been his recent emotion.

Like one who has climbed long and laboriously to reach some far height, and who sighs almost in disappointment when he realizes that no higher levels exist, Grieg sat and gazed blankly before him rapt by vistas reaching far beyond his laboratory walls. Pleasant lands spread out before him, through which came many roads filled with all manner of travelers. They were bringing tribute to him. It was a golden view, rich in the warmth of a bluish golden light that filled the dome of the sky above and seemed to hover like a gilded cloud about his fair mountain. And from all around arose the hum of a teeming civilization—the droning tone of a busy world—the monotone of existence itself. But no, it was only the purr of his faithful little motor, and the buzzing and hissing of a myriad tiny sparks that had shaped his dream. And the glow was still confined to the fragile bulbs before him.

Shaking off his stupor, he turned once more to examine them. Slowly their vapors were condensing in a fine powder about the sides and bottom of the sphere. He opened the bottom stop-cock and caught a little of it on a watch glass, rubbed a bit of it between his fingers, and held it near a light. IT WAS DISTINCTLY YELLOW! And the clouds within his bulbs were still seething violently. . . .

THE END.

It was on the fourth of December when next Grieg was seen—on that night when the crowds had been hurrying homeward and when the newsboys had been calling out their wares with such uncommon vigor. In the private office of the bank occupying the first floor of the building in which Grieg had worked so long, the directors and officers sat solemnly listening to a distinguished looking man, evidently their president. Excitement, worry and suspicion were written on the face of everyone present, and it was all on account of a brief telegram that had been received that day from China. Though it concerned a loss that would be considerable, still worse was the fact that its information had leaked out and might alarm the depositors. On the table about which these men were gathered lay a copy of the evening paper, scarcely an hour from the press, but by now widely scattered in all parts of the city. Under glaring headlines on the first page was the following:

GOLD SENT, IRON ARRIVES

Contents of \$100,000 Box Mysteriously

Changes on Way to China

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 4.—A box containing \$100,000 in gold coin shipped by the Anglo and London-Paris National Bank of San Francisco on the liner *Korea Maru* was found to contain only iron when opened by the consignee in Hong Kong, according to advices received by the bank and steamship company today.

The box had been strongly guarded since it was first filled in the vaults of the San Francisco bank under the close inspection of several of the bank officials themselves. As the seals then applied were unbroken when it reached its destination, officials are at a loss to imagine how or where the exchange took place, and they frankly admit that so far they have found no clue that might lead to a solution of the mystery.

TO OUR READERS

The general reaction of the great majority of our many readers of the *Amazing Stories Annual*, which we issued as an experiment last year, seemed to be: "Give us such a book more often." Therefore we have decided to put out an AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY. Now we want to know what you think of the Quarterly. Please mail back this coupon, filled in, or write us how you feel about it.

I approve of the AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY.....

I do not approve of the AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY

Remarks

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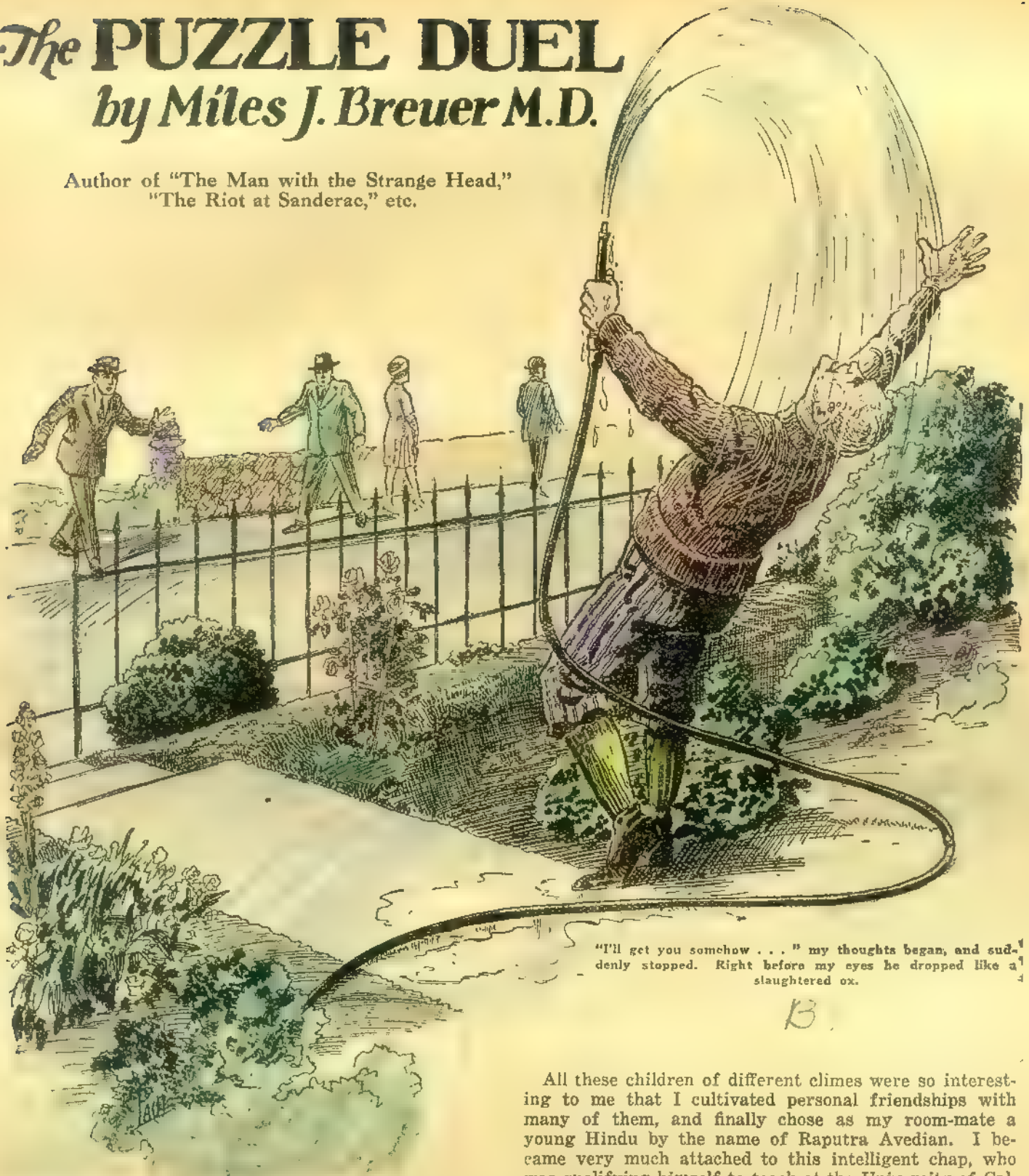
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The PUZZLE DUEL

by Miles J. Breuer M.D.

Author of "The Man with the Strange Head,"
"The Riot at Sanderac," etc.



"I'll get you somehow . . ." my thoughts began, and suddenly stopped. Right before my eyes he dropped like a slaughtered ox.

B.

DURING the years just preceding the World War, our supposedly homogeneous country contained numerous undercurrents of race-hatred. I had an exceptional opportunity to observe them, for I was a student at the University of Chicago, that teeming meeting-place of youthful brilliance from all the ends of the earth. It was fascinating to mingle in class with them—Japanese from their Pacific Island, Balkans from their wild borderland, Latins from the vastness of South America, Englishmen from the Cape, fair-haired Nordics from the Scandinavian countries—all young and all gathered together to learn about the world and how to run it.

All these children of different climes were so interesting to me that I cultivated personal friendships with many of them, and finally chose as my room-mate a young Hindu by the name of Raputra Avedian. I became very much attached to this intelligent chap, who was qualifying himself to teach at the University of Calcutta. His work was in physics—chiefly electrical theory. The longer I knew him, the better I liked him for his quiet and dignified modesty coupled with profound learning and brilliant ability. Despite his dark skin and his strange white headdress, he seemed more like a brother to me than did my fellow-students from my home town in Iowa.

Therefore the incident in the library came as a severe shock to me; a shock both because of my affection for my friend, and because of the startling difference in the workings of the foreign mind from our own American ideas. Raputra had been standing near the door, talking to a short, heavy-set man with a red face and a plateau

of blond hair. Though not personally acquainted with him, I knew who he was: Schleicher, a graduate of the University of Heidelberg in Germany, and doing post-graduate work in physiological chemistry at the University of Chicago. What little I knew of him was unsavory; he had a reputation of being personally difficult to get along with. Right now he seemed to be living up to that reputation. Though I could not hear anything that was said, the sneering expression and the contemptuous snarls of the man were irritating even to a disinterested spectator at a distance. Suddenly Raputra drew himself up to the full height of his tall figure and deliberately slapped the German across the mouth.

The sharp sound of it made me sit upright in my chair. The white mark of the Hindu's fingers showed against the red of Schleicher's face, which grew redder until his downy mustache stood out white against it. He kept puffing up till I was afraid he might explode. When he was nearly purple, he caught himself up with a gulp; his lower jaw worked up and down and he fumbled in his vest pocket. He drew out a card, handed it to my friend, turned on his heel, and walked away. I had read enough about duelling customs in German universities to know what that meant.

Raputra turned and looked at me. His face was calm as I came toward him.

"Peters," he said evenly, "will you assist me in this affair?"

I stood for a moment not knowing what to say.

"I might endure personal insult," he explained, "but no Indian gentleman will listen to national calumny."

He gave me the German's card and walked out of the building.

There was only one other student in the library. When I had recovered from my daze, he was coming toward me.

"Jerry Stoner," he introduced himself succinctly. "As I understand it, these birds want a duel. Schleicher said to me: 'Only his life will satisfy me!'"

"I'm not very strong for this stuff," I said.

"And what's more," replied Jerry Stoner, "the police aren't either."

"Yet these benighted foreigners consider us under obligation to arrange a fight between them," I reflected aloud.

"What we ought to do,"

Jerry Stoner said vehemently, "is to get them out behind the wall of Stagg Field with their coats off and a couple of pairs of eight-ounce gloves. But their minds don't run that way; I know them too well."

"We'll have to fix up some sort of an arrangement that will satisfy their pride and do them no harm," I continued. "I've got an idea. Both of them are clever scientists——"

"Each of them is hungering for the other's life," Jerry Stoner interrupted me.

"Look here!" I drew my chair up to his. "Let's have them fight a modern, scientific duel. Science for weapons! The real fight will be a battle of wits to devise a secret, silent blow. The victims will not know when or how it is to fall. The one who deals it will not be on the scene to be connected with it. To the public it will seem like a natural death or an accident."

"Sounds all right," Jerry Stoner laughed skeptically. "I doubt if they can hurt each other much, if they stick to the rules of that."

"That's what we want, isn't it? Both are well equipped

for such a contest. It will keep them busy for a while. Then, in the press of daily work, they will forget it. I can't imagine any man, who is really busy, letting a little falling-out like this upset him for very long."

Raputra Avedian was delighted with the plan when I outlined it to him. Something about the subtlety of it appealed to his Oriental mind and it also satisfied his scientific nature. He thanked me as profusely as though I had done him a tremendous favor, and for some days afterwards was silent and happy.

He was missing all of one night and I became worried lest he had met with some disaster; but he turned up in the morning, grimy and fatigued as though he had been at some sort of hard labor, but he seemed cheerful and enthusiastic.

He seemed to be taking something very seriously; but I forebore questioning him about it. I could see that he was not neglecting the defensive, although I did not know what his plan of attack was. He assembled a pocket first-aid kit containing all manner of emergency measures, antidotes, stimulants, antitoxins, stomach-pump, purgatives, and emetics. He ate only at the Commons, of the same food with hundreds of other students, and never went anywhere but to his laboratory and to our room at the dormitory, always within view of numerous people and always watching about himself carefully. He was as unapproachable as a royal personage. I regarded his danger as an exaggerated fancy.

The blow came all the more, therefore, as a shocking surprise. The suddenness of it, the mystery of it, left me stunned and paralyzed.

ONE Sunday morning I remained in bed for a few minutes after Raputra had risen and gone into our little bathroom. I could hear him stropping his razor and washing his face. Then there was a heavy thud and a rapid knocking which gradually died down. I leaped up and ran in. Raputra lay on the floor, still moving feebly, but already stiffening in death. He had got his emergency kit open and one hand jerked it about, spilling the contents about the room. It jerked back and forth feebly once, and then he lay still.

I grew so suddenly weak that I had to sit down on the floor for a moment before I could look around. Then I searched carefully. Nowhere on Raputra or about the room were there any signs of violence or of anything unusual.

How had it happened?

The wonder of it occupied my mind for a moment then I caught sight of the wet toothbrush at the foot of the lavatory; the pitiful little subject

told me that my friend had been stricken while brushing his teeth, and a rush of grief drove all the detective impulses out of my mind. Poor Raputra! All his brilliant fire and his vast promise were nothing now!

Again my mind returned to the mystery. The only window in the room was closed and locked on the inside. Outside, five stories of smooth, gray brick wall stretched down to the ground, with a feeble wisp of ivy here and there. There was no exit save through our sleeping room; this had one door into the corridor, locked on the inside. No one could have gotten in or out unobserved. What a foolish idea! Of course no one had gotten in or out. This was the secret, scientific death, and Schleicher had done it.

All at once it came to me that a sudden death of this sort would have to come before a coroner's jury. I de-

OUR author, who is also a practicing physician, is well known to readers of AMAZING STORIES. Here Dr. Breuer has given us a most astonishing story with an entirely novel theme and a surprising ending, thrown in for good measure. We promise you an interesting twenty minutes with this story.

cided that I had better leave everything undisturbed for more skilled investigators than I was. I called the police and waited.

I will not go into detail about the miserable days that followed. The post-mortem examination that took two doctors and two assistants six hours, the analyses for poisons, the minute study of our room and bathroom, the minute questioning and requestioning of myself and all persons in our end of the dormitory, failed to reveal the least suggestion of a possible cause of death.

Not a sign, not a clue, not a mark!

It looked as though he had been struck dead by magic, and the case promised to remain a medical mystery. No less a personage than Doctor Victor LeCount was involved in the investigation. This man, the author of a book on sudden death and its causes, and the world's foremost authority on that subject, had been retained by the insurance company in which Raputra had recently taken a policy; for the presence of the emergency kit had stirred the company's suspicions. However, even this great man could offer no suggestions. So, the death certificate was made out as "sudden death, cause unknown," a burial permit issued, and the insurance paid to Raputra's brother.

Of course, Jerry Stoner and I had kept quiet in regard to the duel. My first impulse was to stand up and accuse Schleicher. But reflection quickly showed me that such a course would not only be futile, but dangerous to both of us. It would sound so improbable that everyone would doubt its truth and no proof of any kind could be produced. On the other hand, we would only lay ourselves open to blame for complicity in the death.

So my friend was buried. The world seemed strangely blank and gray to me. I had not known that a mere roommate could mean so much in one's life. My mind was in a whirl of torment, for in the background of my mind was the guilty feeling that I was to blame. My own brain had contrived the devilish idea. It had never occurred to me that my friend might be the victim. My mind was filled with resentment against the German. Surely the justice that in the movies always overtakes the wicked, was lacking in the real world. Why had the possibility not occurred to me that the overbearing Prussian might not get his just dues?

The more I thought about it, the more my resentment rose against the cruel turn of fate, and against Schleicher himself. He had murdered my friend! I determined to ascertain how, to prove it, and to prosecute him. If I could thus avenge my friend, I could at least justify myself in my own eyes for the regrettable part I had played in the affair. It could not bring my friend back, but it might wipe out my guilty feeling. I thought about it constantly, alternating between the depression of self-censure and the efforts of solving the mystery. I was quite unable to attend to my class work. The problem interfered with my sleep and appetite.

FINALLY, I went to LeCount. My regular course would bring me under his instruction the following year, and I had no hesitation in seeking his acquaintance now.

He was short and rotund, with a fat, grey mustache. His students looked up to him with awe because of his learning and with fear because of his snappy manners. I found him at a microscope in the Pathology Laboratory. He was not much of a conversationalist; when I tried to explain why I had come, he jerked out:

"Tell me all of it this time!"

That embarrassed me from the beginning; evidently he referred to my testimony before the coroner's jury, and in some uncanny way knew that I had withheld some information. Then he sat motionless, without the quiver of a muscle all the time I was telling the story.

After I had finished, he continued to stare at me until I thought I would go frantic. Finally I had to speak:

"Do you think Schleicher killed him?" I asked.

"Of course he did!"

"In God's name, how?"

"I don't know."

That was all. He looked at me inscrutably. I did not know what to do or say. His eyes were fixed on me until I began to think I had done it myself.

"Possible, all right," he finally snapped. "Now go over all the details of that Sunday morning."

As I talked, he interrupted me frequently:

"Did he take a drink every morning?"

"Did he ever cut himself with his razor?"

"The toothbrush! Ah, the toothbrush!"

"The dormitory is familiar to me," he mused as I concluded. "It is possible for someone to get into your rooms during your absence, is it not?"

"Yes, but——"

"There is only one explanation possible. Your history eliminates every other. Some sort of poison——"

"But none was found in the post-mortem analyses——"

He looked at me sternly for interrupting, and then went on as though I should have known better:

"Here are some poisons that leave no trace perceptible to the analyst."

He pointed to a chapter in his own book on toxicology, and continued:

"Aconitine kills in doses too small to leave any detectable traces. Rattlesnake or cobra venom, if introduced directly into the circulation, that is, not through the stomach, also kills without leaving any traces for the analyst. Finally, Vaughan's split-protein products have much the same effect as the snake venoms."

He regarded me steadily for a while and then thrust again:

"Now do you have an idea how he met his death?"

"Of course, the poisons are a possibility," I pondered. "But how were they administered? There are no marks of needles——"

"Think some more. Perhaps you can recall if there was a spot of blood on the toothbrush?"

"Yes. Almost everyone's gums bleed occasionally during the brushing of the teeth. Raputra was more susceptible to bleeding than I."

"Well? Did Schleicher know that?"

"He might have." I could not make out what he was driving at.

"All right. We can probably eliminate the aconitine. Death by that is slower than this man's was, and does not produce the convulsion that seemed to be present in this case. But either snake-venom or split-protein placed on the toothbrush Saturday night when both of you were out celebrating the football victory, would introduce enough poison directly into the bloodstream to have caused just such a death. Where's the toothbrush?"

"In the room. I don't think it has been touched since that morning."

In response to his curt nod, I bolted out and was back with the toothbrush in twenty minutes. By the time I returned, he had two guinea-pigs ready. He first injected one with some physiological salt solution.

"That is the control," he said; "just to prove that the salt solution is pure and harmless."

The guinea-pig was quite unconcerned after its experience. Then Dr. LeCount soaked the toothbrush for a few minutes in a test-tube half full of the salt solution, and injected a syringe of that into the second pig. He hardly had time to remove the needle; the animal shivered, kicked convulsively several times and was dead.

"Of course, I can't tell you whether it is rattlesnake or cobra; it might be split-protein. But, is that proof

enough?" The doctor fixed his wide, blue eyes on me again.

"That's proof enough!" I exclaimed. "I'm going straight to the District Attorney's office. I'll get Schleicher yet."

Dr. LeCount smiled. That was a rare thing. It meant something.

"The District Attorney's office does not close until four o'clock. It is now eleven," he said deliberately. "Wait a while."

So I waited, while he studied me. I felt like a germ on a slide.

"In the first place," he began in his favorite phrase, "scientific proof is not legal proof. This sort of evidence wouldn't convict anybody. My work is the study of disease, not of law; but I get mixed up with law often enough to know that you can never get a case against that man. You may prove it morally and scientifically, but not legally."

"Secondly," he eyed me fixedly, "for a scientific man, you are inconsistent. You'll have to reason more rigidly than that if you want to pass my class next year. These two men stepped out of the bounds of the law when they arranged their duel. Now all parties concerned should be satisfied. To invoke the law now is childish in the eyes of a fair man."

"Finally, what about the part you played in it? You should have thought of this possibility when you planned the duel. Now you are apt to get into trouble as an accomplice."

I left his presence humble, but not subdued. The desire for revenge is a shamefully primeval impulse; it is so powerful, that its suppression causes even civilized men considerable difficulty. As I walked down the street, I shook my fists in the air, vowing that I would get Schleicher somehow.

Involuntarily my footsteps carried me toward Schleicher's residence. For—and it doubled my resentment—Schleicher was evidently independently wealthy; at least he spent money as though he were. He never got sufficiently accustomed to Chicago's ways to live in a flat or an apartment. He occupied one of the cottages in the row opposite Washington Park, and had a flower-garden in his front yard. Gardening was his hobby.

Then I recollected that he had not been seen since the day of the challenge. Was it guilt that kept him in concealment? The report had gone about his laboratory that he was confined to his home by sickness. I strode quickly toward his house.

There he was now in his garden, sprinkling with a hose. If he had been sick, he must have just recovered, for it was his first appearance. I walked slowly past on the opposite side of the street. He stood stiffly, holding his red face arrogantly above the rest of humanity, and moving the stream of water from his hose with military precision. He didn't even see me. I execrated him; I almost shook my fist at him. I wondered what to do next.

"I'll get you somehow——" my thoughts began, and suddenly stopped.

Schleicher had toppled over and lay flat on the ground. He had been standing in his stiff, military attitude, spraying the hose this way and that on the flowers and shrubbery. Then right before my eyes he dropped like a slaughtered ox. Now he lay still and the hose spurted over him in an arch where it had fallen out of his hand.

I reached him first though a number of people also came running up. His heart seemed to flutter a little, but as I felt of it, it stopped still. Half a dozen people gathered before I had him looked over. He was undoubtedly dead. Nowhere on him was there a scratch or a mark of any kind.

Another sudden death! Another secret, silent, scientific blow! This time the mystery of it elated me. I left the others crowding around the body, while I eagerly looked the surroundings over carefully, behind the fence, under the porch, through the shrubbery, hoping that I might find a clue to the method.

Then, a gleam of metal, hidden in the shrubbery, caused me to halt and stagger back. I had caught myself just in time to prevent my hand from touching it. There was an insulated copper plate concealed in the bush. From it ran a cable which I quickly trace toward the Jackson Park Elevated Railway.

The whole scheme was clear to me now. I understood the meaning of the coil of cable and the bag of tools that Raputra had carried out of our room with him on the night that he had spent out. The plate in the bush was connected with the third rail of the elevated railway, and when the water from Schleicher's hose struck it, the powerful current that ran the trains overhead had electrocuted him on the spot.

The crowd about the body increased. The distant clanging of an ambulance swelled rapidly. I stood off from the crowd and reflected. Things seemed to balance now. Appropriately, by the hand of a man several days in his grave, movie-justice had been done!

THE END.

SPECIAL NOTICE

EVEN before the appearance of our First ANNUAL of AMAZING STORIES, with its famous "The Master Mind of Mars," by Edgar Rice Burroughs, hundreds of our readers showed great interest in this world-famous story, and consequently swamped our office with advance orders.

Now, for the convenience of those readers who were unable to purchase a copy, we have, for immediate disposal, a few remaining copies. If you desire this ANNUAL, write immediately and enclose 50c.

132 pages—large magazine size.

AMAZING STORIES ANNUAL
Featuring Edgar Rice Burroughs'
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When the Sleeper Wakes

By H. G. WELLS

(Concluded from page 125)

air, and there flashed a star in the thick glass wind-screen that protected him. The aeroplane slowed and dropped to foil his stroke, and dropped too low. Just in time he saw the wind-wheels of Bromley hill rushing up towards him, and spun about and up as the aeroplane he was chasing crashed among them. All its voices wove into a felt of yelling. The great fabric seemed to be standing on end for a second among the heeling and splintering vans, and then it flew to pieces. Huge splinters came flying through the air, its engines burst like shells. A hot rush of flame shot overhead into the darkling sky.

"Two!" he cried, with a bomb from overhead bursting as it fell, and forthwith he was beating up again. A glorious exhilaration possessed him now, a giant activity. His troubles about humanity, about his inadequacy, were gone for ever. He was a man in battle rejoicing in his power. Aeroplanes seemed radiating from him in every direction, intent only upon avoiding him, the yelling of their packed passengers came in short gusts as they swept by. He chose his third quarry, struck hastily and did but turn it on edge. It escaped him, to smash against the tall cliff of London wall. Flying from that impact he skimmed the darkling ground so nearly he could see a frightened rabbit bolting up a slope. He jerked up steeply, and found himself driving over south London with the air about him vacant. To the right of him a wild riot of signal rockets from the Ostrogites banked tumultuously in the sky. To the south the wreckage of half a dozen air ships flamed, and east and west and north the air ships fled before him. They drove away to the east and north, and went about in the south, for they could not pause in the air. In their present confusion, any attempt at evolution would have meant disastrous collisions. He could scarcely realize the thing he had done. In every quarter aeroplanes were receding. They were receding. They dwindled smaller and smaller. They were in flight!

He passed two hundred feet or so above the Roehampton stage. It was black with people and noisy with their frantic shouting. But why was the Wimbledon Park stage black and cheering, too? The smoke and flame of Streatham now hid the three further stages. He curved about and rose to see them and the northern quarters. First came the square masses of Shooter's Hill into sight from behind the smoke, lit and orderly with the aeroplane that had landed and its disembarking negroes. Then came Blackheath, and then under the corner of the reek the Norwood stage. On Blackheath no aeroplane had landed but an aeropile lay upon the guides. Norwood was covered by a swarm of little figures running to and fro in a passionate confusion. Why? Abruptly he understood. The stubborn defence of the flying stages was over, the people were pouring into the under-ways of these last strongholds of Ostrog's usurpation. And then, from far away on the northern border of the city, full of glorious import to him, came a sound, a signal, a note of triumph, the leaden thud of a gun. His lips fell apart, his face was disturbed with emotion.

He drew an immense breath. "They win," he shouted to the empty air; "the people win!" The sound of a second gun came like an answer. And then he saw the aeropile on Blackheath was running down its guides to launch. It lifted clean and rose. It shot up into the air, driving straight southward and away from him.

In an instant it came to him what this meant. It must needs be Ostrog in flight. He shouted and dropped towards it. He had the momentum of his elevation and fell slanting down the air and very swiftly. It rose steeply at his approach. He allowed for its velocity and drove straight upon it.

It suddenly became a mere flat edge, and behold! he was past it, and driving headlong down with all the force of his futile blow.

He was furiously angry. He reeled the engine back along its shaft and went circling up. He saw Ostrog's machine beating up a spiral before him. He rose straight towards it, won above it by virtue of the impetus of his swoop and by the advantage and weight of a man. He dropped headlong—dropped and missed again! As he rushed past he saw the face of Ostrog's aeronaut confident and cool and in Ostrog's attitude a winning resolution. Ostrog was looking steadfastly away from him—to the south. He realized with a gleam of wrath how bungling his flight must be. Below he saw the Croyden hills. He jerked upward and once more he gained on his enemy.

He glanced over his shoulder and his attention was arrested by a strange thing. The eastward stage, the one on Shooter's Hill, appeared to lift; a flash changing to a tall grey shape, a cowed figure of smoke and duct, jerked into the air. For a moment this cowed figure stood motionless, dropping huge masses of metal from its shoulders, and then it began to uncoil a dense head of smoke. The people had blown it up, aeroplane and all! As suddenly a second flash and grey shape sprang up from the Norwood stage. And even as he stared at this came a dead report, and the air wave of the first explosion struck him. He was flung up and sideways.

For a moment the aeropile fell nearly edgewise with her nose down, and seemed to hesitate whether to overset altogether. He stood on his wind-shield wrenching the wheel that swayed up over his head. And then the shock of the second explosion took his machine sideways.

He found himself clinging to one of the ribs of his machine, and the air was blowing past him and upward. He seemed to be hanging quite still in the air, with the wind blowing up past him. It occurred to him that he was falling. Then he was sure that he was falling. He could not look down.

He found himself recapitulating with incredible swiftness all that had happened since his awakening, the days of doubt, the days of Empire, and at last the tumultuous discovery of Ostrog's calculated treachery. He was beaten but London was saved. London was saved!

The thought had a quality of utter unreality. Who was he? Why was he holding so tightly with his hands? Why could he not leave go? In such a fall as this countless dreams have ended. But in a moment he would wake. . . .

His thoughts ran swifter and swifter. He wondered if he should see Helen again. It seemed so unreasonable that he should not see her again. It *must* be a dream! Yet surely he would meet her. She at least was real. She was real. He would wake and meet her.

Although he could not look at it, he was suddenly aware that the earth was very near.

The TERRORS of the UPPER AIR

by Frank Orndorff



"They got poor Dexter. He went first, after we had enlarged the hole, and before he had dropped five hundred feet, the monsters were after him." He was helpless in the parachute.



PEMBERTON, the Great Detective, renowned as never having failed to get his man, spoke to the Secretary of the President of the State Fair, and passed on to the President's office door marked "Private." He entered without knocking.

"Well! What happening is responsible for this visit?" The President sprang up and grasped Pemberton's hand and pulled a chair out for him. "You are not in the habit of calling on me lately except on business. Who are the unlucky people at the Fair that you want? For my guess is that you are after some poor birds."

Pemberton sat down and placed his hat on the President's desk. "You are right to call them birds. I am after your human birds, and they can't particularly be called 'poor'—not now, anyhow."

"What!" exclaimed the President, as he half rose in his seat, "surely you are not after Kidwell and Dexter, the aviators who are flying for the Fair."

"The very two men I am after."

"But what have they done? It must be something serious."

"It is serious. You remember the Windsor Bank Robbery of over a week ago, where the cashier was killed and nearly a half a million dollars, mostly in large bills was stolen? The two men who did the job escaped in an auto. They were chased to a large wooded tract just about nightfall. When the pursuers closed in, they found the car but the men and the money were gone."

"I remember that and also the mystery of their escape from the hundreds of men that surrounded the woods."

"They did not escape *through* this fence of men, but *over* them. As soon as I had gone over the ground, I found tracks of where an aeroplane had made a short run in a break in the woods and could easily have shot upwards above the trees and away. The place was far enough from the edge of the woods, to enable the roar of the motor to go unheard as the two men fled away in the night.

The run to the woods and the flight in the aeroplane was most likely planned ahead by the two men and would have remained undiscovered had it not been for a mark made in the soft ground by two small cuts in one of the aeroplane tires. It was one chance in a thousand that we ever found the aeroplane tracks and one in a million that it left the print of these two small cuts in the tire's tread. Hundreds of aeroplanes are being driven across that part of the country each day and it would have been practically impossible to find the one that made the track if it had not been for the two small cuts. My men have informed me that the aeroplane of Kidwell and Dexter has a tire on it with two small cuts the same size and distance apart as the two marks left in the woods. I have just arrived and we expect to arrest the two aviators within the next few minutes. I thought I would notify you first, as I realize it will stop your exhibition flight for the Fair."

"If these two men are murderers and robbers, as you state, I want you to arrest them at once—exhibition flight or no exhibition flight. You will have to hurry or wait until—listen—" The President broke off and turned his head to one side to hear better.

A roar of a multitude cheering came to the two listening men—the huge crowd at the Grand Stand were split-

ting the air with deafening cheers for something. "They are up and off." The President continued after listening awhile. "You will have to wait until they come down. They are up to beat the world's highest altitude record. Here is one of our advertisements for today, Read it." Pemberton took the paper that was handed him and read the following:

"WILL TRY TO BEAT THE WORLD'S HIGHEST ALTITUDE RECORD"

STATE FAIR—AUGUST 25, 19—

Kidwell and Dexter—the world's most dare-devil aviators will try to beat the world's highest altitude record for an aeroplane. They will use the latest type of aeroplane with new wing devices for climbing and flying in the rarefied air of miles above the earth. They will carry an extra supply of oxygen. They will have the latest thing in wireless telephone instruments and will be in constant communication with the receiving station established in front of the Grand Stand. To the receiving instrument will be attached a sound magnifier and those within a radius of several hundred feet can listen to the account from the aviators' own lips as they circle up—up—up.

Don't Forget the Place and Date

Pemberton handed the paper back and inquired, "How long will it take them to make the flight?"

"About two or three hours is all they figured they would need," he answered.

Pemberton decided to go to the receiving station to listen, and the President went with him.

The two men made their way across the crowded Fair Grounds until they came in front of the large Grand Stand. Here a crowd of several thousand people were jammed around a platform on which were a few men, and a table of instruments, the largest part of which were four huge phonograph-like horns that faced in four directions. They made their way through the crowd and had just climbed to the platform, when a voice issued from the horns. The words were:

"Have just reached three thousand feet."

Looking upwards, Pemberton could see a speck circling above and rapidly growing smaller. It was the aeroplane winging its way ever higher and higher. He leaned over to the President, "How is it we can hear their voices and can not hear the roar of the motor? On the ground it was impossible to hear a voice because of the

deafening roar of an aeroplane motor."

The President leaned over and tapped one of the men on the shoulder, who was tinkering with the instrument, and said, "Billy, tell Mr. Pemberton here about the wireless telephone—tell him why one can hear a voice from above and yet not hear the roar of the motors."

Billy dropped into a chair next to Pemberton and keeping one eye on the instrument, explained:

"Kidwell and Dexter are using the same kind of wireless telephone instruments that our aviators in France had begun to use when the war ended, to communicate with each other and with headquarters. You know sound

OUR knowledge of the upper air is very limited. The highest point a human being has ever ascended in a free balloon is about seven miles. What exists beyond this, we do not know. Our new author presents a very unusual, as well as complex situation, with a typical O. Henry ending. As to ourselves, we enjoyed the story hugely and the chances are that you will too.

is vibration of the air and travels in waves and in a straight line unless turned aside by something. The aviator's instrument is like a helmet and covers most of his head. The receivers are flat and lie over his ears. The outside sound is deadened by the padding in the helmet and it was found that it would be necessary for the padding to cover most of the lower jaw to kill the outside sound. The mouth-piece, the part they talk into, is fastened directly in front of the mouth. It is padded to stop the outside sound. Only a tube-like opening directly even with the person's mouth is left unpadded. There are three or four small holes in the tube and when the person talks, his voice is thrown straight through the small openings and makes the instrument work while other sounds pass by as the waves do not get a straight entrance to the diaphragm."

"Both the receivers and the mouth-piece have wires running to a plug in the side of the aeroplane which connects with the batteries and instrument that send the wireless waves in all directions and reach us; they also catch any that we should send and transfer it to speech when it reaches the ears. Instead of the usual receiving instrument, we have hooked on a sound magnifier here, so that everybody can hear directly. Now the very—"

"One mile up and everything is running fine."

The voice of one of the men from the speck above spoke from the horns. A cheer greeted the announcement.

"WHO is doing the talking?" Pemberton asked.

"Kidwell will do all the talking because it is he who is equipped with the long distance sending and receiving apparatus. Dexter can talk with Kidwell and Kidwell can talk with Dexter by changing the plug at the side of the machine, so he is directly connected with Dexter. Dexter is the pilot in the rear seat and will drive unless something happens. If something should happen, Kidwell can drive as they have double controls."

"Hey, below! We are having fun up here chasing toy balloons. Those that have been let loose on the Fair Grounds have reached this far up. There are twenty or thirty in sight. We have run down three or four. One was thrown back by the propeller's draft and hit Old "Dex" on the head and busted. He would have jumped out of his seat if he were not tied down with a safety belt. Thought part of the machinery had hit him, I guess. We are climbing in circles and staying over the Fair Grounds as nearly as we can. The hand on our instrument is gradually crawling near two miles and we can begin to tell it is getting very cold. We feel sorry for you poor land mortals below sweating in that 100 degrees in the shade. But say, 'you don't have to stay in the shade'—Ha, Ha!"

The sound of Kidwell's laughter from two miles above roared through the horns. It ceased and no other sound came from above for several minutes.

"Got another balloon; caught it alive this time; going to tie my pipe to it and drop it overboard. The pipe will pull it down. Tell the kids down there I will give five dollars to the one who gets it and I will wring their necks if any of them busts my pipe. Here she goes—"

Cheers and laughter greeted this last announcement and many small boys jammed in the crowd began to crowd and squirm frantically to get out into the center field where they could watch for Kidwell's pipe pulling a toy balloon down.

"You below! We are going to have trouble in just a minute. Saw several balloons above us snatched and rushed east at a speed that makes us look like a snail. It's one of those terrific wind currents that different persons have discovered two or three miles up. We will be O. K. when we get in it, but going from slow to fast

air is going to give us some rough riding. We are starting; I can feel our old machine beginning to pitch. Here we go!—God, we are pitching and spinning like a leaf. We are on our tail—now we are upside down. Over we go sideways—now we are level—whew, we just made a complete flip-flop. It's a wonder we hold together—we are rocking and pitching like a row boat on a stormy ocean.

"We are getting up in the main current and don't pitch so much. It is all I can do to hold my dinner down. I'm sea-sick—we are heading west, but I think we are losing several miles a minute as this terrific air current drifts us east."

A deadly hush fell on the crowd below as they pictured the aeroplane being tossed and pitched about in one of the mighty air currents that are found miles above the earth. They could see the two men fighting to keep their machine right side up, as they fought through the eddies and whirls at the edge of the current and into the steady but fast moving air of the center. When Kidwell announced that they had made it, a mighty cheer went up. Several minutes passed and no sound came from the men miles above—then—

"Hurrah for the Liberty Motor—we just had another fight to get out of the big current and are now in still air above it. We were pitched and flung about, upside down and every which way, just as when we entered it. Our Motor did not miss a lick. Old "Dex" got sick. I saw him gulping and raise his helmet and lean over, but nothing happened. Now we are riding smoothly. We are heading straight west instead of circling so as to gain the distance we were carried backwards in the big air current. It is getting cold. We are using oxygen from our tanks as the air is mighty thin here—Dex has just called my attention to our instrument—what do you reckon she reads?—whoop—she has touched it. She's reached thirty thousand feet. We'll make it. We'll break that old world's altitude record."

A roar that shook the Grand Stand went up from the listening crowd below. For ten minutes they cheered and flung things in the air in their excitement. A few more minutes and the world's highest altitude record would belong to America once more. The cheering died down and then broke out afresh.

"What is the world's record?" Pemberton leaned over and shouted above the din into the president's ear.

"A little less than thirty-five thousand feet," the President answered in one of the partly quiet spells of the crowd.

"Thirty-one thousand" came from the horns,—only those right against them could hear, but they began to relay the news. "Thirty-one thousand." Another deafening cheer rang out. The crowd became silent as the President raised his hand for silence and pointed to the horns.

"Thirty-two thousand and Old Dex grinning like a frog."

This time only a laugh from the crowd greeted the announcement. They would hold their cheers for the last as they wanted to hear all now.

"It's just about there—now its closer—just a little more—near—nearer—Gee, it moves slowly—just ready to touch—now it touches—whoopee—it's over—we have reached the world's altitude record—now we have passed it."

The Grand Stand roared and shook as the crowd below let loose. Hats flew high in the air, men thumped each other like boys. Once more the world's altitude record belonged to America—to the United States—brought to it by the two dauntless aviators, far out of sight in the vast space above. Those in the Grand Stand began to stamp and shout in unison and stopped only when the

stand threatened to break under the strains of the thousands of thumping feet. At the rear of the mass of people, a boy with a toy balloon struggled to get through to the platform.

"Hey, kid, look out or you'll get hurt crowding in like that," a man addressed him.

"I caught the pipe," the boy cried as he held aloft a pipe tied to the balloon string.

"Kidwell's pipe—Kidwell's pipe"—the man shouted as he gathered the boy up and held him above the crowd's head. From hand to hand they passed the boy to the platform, where the President of the Fair met him and led him to the front of the platform where the boy held up the toy balloon with the pipe tied to it. The boy was still panting, for he had caught the pipe nearly a quarter of a mile away and had run all the way back to the crowd, while other boys chased him. The President took a five dollar bill from his pocket and gave it to the boy and took possession of the pipe. The boy struck through the crowd, headed for the refreshment stands, while the President returned to his seat.

"Forty thousand feet up and cold as fifty North Poles."

The people became quiet with awe. Not satisfied with breaking the world's altitude record, these two dare-devils were steadily climbing higher and higher. Forty thousand feet—miles high—how far would they go?

"We have just noticed a queer color of the air just a short way to our west, although we can hardly call it color. It might be just our imagination; anyway Dex has headed the machine in that direction—yes we notice the difference more as we get closer—turn her Dex—turn her—My God it's a whirlwind—loop her back, Dex—turn—"

The last, regarding turning the machine, came from the horns in a shout and must have been meant for Dexter. It broke off suddenly as Kidwell must have changed the plug from below to connect with Dexter.

THOUSANDS of eyes unconsciously looked upward, although all knew that it was impossible to see to the great height the aeroplane had attained. But all realized that something serious was happening miles above. What had happened? Would the aeroplane come flying down from above and land a shattered wreck?

Minutes passed and no voice was heard through the horn. The suspense became unbearable. Several more minutes passed and at last came—

"Hello, below,—we thought we were gone that time. We ran into a whirling draft of air of cyclone speed. Our machine was caught in it and we were pitched over and over like a feather, whirling, tossing, and tumbling. We were flung up—up—and up. We don't know how far up we are now, because we were carried upward for many minutes at many miles a minute. Our instrument only registers sixty thousand feet and the hand reached that mark long before we were pitched out of the whirling mass and into still air. The current seems to come up and then turn east and we were flung to the top side. We must be fifteen or twenty miles high—way above any height we dreamed a person could fly. Our motor does not run as smoothly as it did below, but it is doing fairly well. We still have to use our own supply of oxygen. The movements of the machine are rather slow and sluggish. It might be that we are flying in air hurled up in that mighty up-rushing funnel of air from below. We can not understand it. We are circling about, getting our nerve back to make a dive for the earth. If we get through the high eastward current of air and miss the upward whirlwind, we will be O. K. If we hit the upward whirlwind, we will be flung back like a leaf. We can feel the intense cold through all our furs. It must be fifty degrees below zero. Nothing but space,

space, space, as far as you can see and in every direction. You feel like loosening your belt, stepping on the edge of the machine and stepping off into—nothing—you feel as though there were no world—no God—No—"

The voice broke off and then continued with a note of excitement in it.

"We have made a discovery; there are clouds up here—Dex just pointed several out to me and we are headed for them. They seem very dense as we get nearer."

For several minutes the voice stopped and those below talked in suppressed excitement. They were past the cheering stage now. What had happened miles above the earth had made them curious and started them thinking. Then the voice came, quivering with a tone of excitement.

"People, below! I am going to make a statement to you that will seem unbelievable, a statement that will upset all past theories of the upper air. If I were not sure of bringing down proofs of my statements, I would not make it and I don't even ask you to believe it, until we come back.

"People, below—there is vegetable and animal life here. We are now flying above a floating island of vegetable substance while around us and above are hundreds of other floating islands of the same substance. I have managed to catch a small handful of the substance as it floated in the air between the larger bodies of the same thing.

"It is nearly transparent, but has a pale greenish color. It is spongy and tough, being made up of a rubber-like material full of thousands of small gas pockets. It must be this gas that keeps it afloat at this great height. It grows on long rope-like branches like sea-kelp or some kind of moss. What we took for clouds were great masses of this plant matted together and floating about. I believe we could walk on these islands, but it would be impossible to land our aeroplane for it would sink too deep to get it out again.

"WE have seen a small bat-like animal fly from one island to another. Another of the same kind of creatures is flying alongside us and keeps turning its head to watch us as though it wonders what we are. I believe it is as much surprised to see us as we are to see it. Dex has just notified me that he will try to run it down and wants me to catch or kill it. We must bring down proofs or we would never dare tell of such things as are up here. Here we go—we are after the bat-like animal. Zip!—the blamed little thing is gone; it was just fooling along with us and when we whirled to reach it, it shot away like a bullet. They are too speedy for us to run down. I was close enough to see that it was nearly the size and shape of a bat, except that it had a head like a bird with large owl-like eyes, and had a beak instead of a mouth with teeth. It was of the same pale sickly green like the plants we have found.

"Dex has spied something else ahead and is pointing for me to see but I fail to make it out. Now I see it. It is something long twisting through the air. It is turning and coming this way. It is another animal, or a reptile for it is more like a snake. No, not like a snake either, for it is about ten feet long and flat as can be. Its head is also formed with a beak. It looks like a huge ribbon floating through the air. It has turned and is flying above and to one side of us, looking down at us while it winds its way along. If we can get within striking distance, I will take a swipe at it with a wrench. I would like to bring it down—Look out, Dex—now—hold her steady."

The last came in a shouted command and must have been meant for Dexter, then—

"That queer snake-like thing turned and in a flash

had straightened out in a line and shot down on us like a bullet. It hit the top of our right wing and went through as though the wing were a spider web. Then it struck one of our stay wires and was split long ways for a foot or more. It clung to the wire, thrashing about, a blood of that pale greenish color oozing out. When I was ready to go out on the wing and try to get it, it fell on the lower plane and was blown off. It fell below to the plant island over which we are flying now. If it had struck either of us, it would have been death. A short distance more and we will make the dive for earth as our oxygen supply is getting low. I have been catching stray pieces of the plants of which the islands are made and have a bunch packed in the bottom of my cockpit. There is also a large bunch caught in the wires of our left wing and several small bunches caught in other places. These might hold fast until we get down. I have been wondering if the change of pressure on the plant and animals—if we can catch any animals to bring down—will cause them to contract. The effect on them should be just the opposite of the effect on the fish that have been brought up from two miles or more under the sea; when they came up, the pressure was so much less that some swelled up and exploded. I believe these animals would be pressed together more if brought to the denser air of the earth's surface. This plant up here might be made good use of below at some future time and if—of all the sights—what monsters! What fierce fighting monsters. Look at the great gashes they are tearing in each other. They can't last.

"Oh, I forgot, you below—we just turned a half circle around the end of a medium sized floating island and have come upon one of the most awful battles between two of the biggest and fiercest of monsters. One is like a large flying alligator, except that it has a huge beak and large bat-like wings. The other is shaped like an octopus, but has flat arms and two large balloon-like appendages on its back. It has a hellish beak. They are closed in one biting, clawing and choking mass. We are circling them and watching. The flying alligator just laid open one of the devil-fish of the air's balloons. It shrank as though it were full of gas. Now they are whirling on the air so fast you can hardly tell what is happening. The alligator has lost the use of one of its wings. The octopus has wrapped several of its arms around it. They are starting to sink. They're dropping, two of the arms, bitten off. Everything up here is that sickly green, both monsters are that color and they are bleeding the green blood—if it is blood. They are now covered with gashes all over their bodies. They can't last much longer. There goes the other balloon. It shrinks—now they are falling.

"**T**HEY don't stop fighting. We are following them down and still circling around them. The two fighting air demons have fallen on the big island below us. They are hardly able to move. The alligator devil is now on top and rending the octopus to shreds. Its days are over. The flying alligator—for I don't know what else to call it—is victor, but it will never be able to fly again. One wing is completely torn in shreds and the other is not much better. Its body is full of big wounds. The din of their screams and clashing of their beaks must have been awful. Where they came from or what they were fighting about, we do not know. It was one of the most terrific and most awe-inspiring sights, man ever witnessed.

"The flying alligator has risen on its hind legs and is trying to lunge itself into the air, but it can only flutter like a broken-winged bird. It is giving out its cry, as we can see by the motion of its beak.

"Dex shut off the motor for an instant and drifted over its head. It uttered a piercing scream like

a thousand wild cat whistles, and lunged up for us. I hate to think what would have happened if it had been able to fly. I believe it would have rent us in pieces in a second. We are leaving here right now, for Dex has pointed out another flying alligator about a mile away, which is coming this way. It must be answering the wounded one's cries. It is traveling fast and coming from the north. We can see its giant, bat-like wings beating the air and it rises and falls at each stroke. We are speeding westward and as soon as we reach the edge of this extra large floating island over which we are flying, we will dive for the earth. We can not see the edge, but it cannot be over a mile or so. We have left the wounded flying alligator about a half mile back, and the other monster has already reached it and has circled above it once.

"God, it has turned and is headed after us, its huge wings beating faster than before. We must reach the edge and dive, for it travels twice as fast as our sluggish-acting machine. I am not scared, for I can see the edge about two miles ahead and we will reach it before the demon can overtake us. Another has dropped from above where the wounded alligator is and it, also, is now headed after us. Miles above the earth and being chased by two hideous monsters. Have you ever noticed birds flying? When they beat their wings downwards, they not only go forward, but partly upward as well, and when they raise their wings for another stroke, they sink a little instead of keeping a straight course ahead. That is the way these demons fly. Dex is giving our machine all it will take.

"The two demons are going fast, but we will reach the edge before they can catch us. God help us, another monster and straight ahead. We can not go that way and must turn south or north. No, not north for I see two coming from that direction. We are nearly surrounded and our only hope is south. I see the edge south, but it is a mile farther away than west. But we will make it. I don't see any of the demons coming from that direction. Our machine is roaring at full speed, but we are not making over fifty or sixty miles in this rarefied air. The demons of this upper air are flying twice as fast and now there are nearly a dozen close on our trail and swiftly gaining. . . . We are near the edge and our danger is over. A minute more and we would have been lost, for now there are two monsters in front of us. We are surrounded, but we will reach the edge and will head down like a bullet before they can get near enough to head us off. Their screams are bringing other monsters from all directions.

"Just passed one of those hideous flying devil-fish and see another ahead and above us. We are just at the edge and are tipping down for our long dive. Will be with you in a few—Dex, Dex, Look out for the devil-fish. For God's sake, look, Dex—Oh, God, too late—We are done. Our propeller is shattered, we are falling. Look out below—No, we have fallen on the edge of the island. We are tearing through. No we have stopped. God, we are in a fix. The devil-fish flung itself at us and into our propeller and wrecked it and blocked the controls and we fell straight down. . . . We are within a few hundred feet of the edge, the weight of the machine has sunk us until we rest in a sloping crater about fifty feet deep. The monsters are arriving and flying in circles above us. Our motor is quiet and when we raise our receivers, the screams and snapping of their giant beaks almost deafen us. Our only hope now is to reach the edge and trust ourselves to our safety parachutes."

For several minutes the horns were quiet and the people jammed around them listening for further word from the two men in the void above. They whispered together

in low under-tones and every minute or so their eyes traveled upward in an attempt to pierce the blind of the miles distance. But in vain. At last—it seemed hours, though it was only a few minutes—the voice came again.

"We took our parachutes from their holders on the side of the machine and started up to the top of the sink-hole we are in. The monsters began to come closer as we neared the top and one made a dive for us, so we retreated to the machine. They seem to be afraid to come into this pit we are in. We found a place on one side of the pit where the vegetable has been pulled until it has pulled apart and we can see below. We are going to this hole now and enlarge it sufficiently to enable us to drop through—all is clear below—so good bye, but watch for us to come sailing down soon. We are carrying oxygen tanks with us to breathe."

The voice ceased and the crowd began to watch above for any specks that might turn out to be the two men and their parachutes. Many minutes passed, then the voice came, a voice filled with a tone of despair and terror.

"**T**HEY got poor Dexter. He went first, after we had enlarged the hole, and before he had dropped five hundred feet a dozen of the monsters were after him. Helpless in the parachute, they dived on him and dragged him up to the top of the island and tore him to shreds. Now they are screaming and snapping their beaks above this pit and are swooping nearer and nearer. Their taste of blood seems to have made them wilder. I will fight them from the cockpit and if I can hold out until night, I might drop through the hole and escape in the darkness. I have broken a spar loose for a club. They are coming closer. I struck at that one. It just missed my head. They are gathering in a bunch. They are diving for me in one mass. I'm lost—Good-bye."

A shriek of a man in mortal agony and terror rang out in the air, followed by a shriek from the crowd. Then all was still. The people knew all was over in the far upper air. Men stood gazing upward, ghastly white, while women buried their faces in their hands and wept.

A dull thud was heard at the far side of the infield and people began to gather there on a run. A hole showed where something had fallen with enough force to bury itself. Hurriedly digging, they unearthed an oxygen tank, one of the tanks that Kidwell and Dexter had taken up with them. A cry from some people as they pointed aloft drew thousands of eyes in that direction. Fluttering and falling, something was coming down. Several hands grabbed it as soon as it came within reach. One uttered a cry and let go. He held up his hands in horror. They were wet with fresh blood.

A broken and torn part of an aeroplane wing, splattered with red blood, fell. Kidwell and the aeroplane must have been torn to pieces by the demons of the

far upper air, and the tank and pieces of the plane scattered over the edge of the floating vegetable island, must have fallen to earth.

Another shout and once more all looked aloft. The air was full in all directions with thousands of fluttering pieces that looked like paper. When they fell among the crowd a shout of surprise went up.

"Money—Money—One dollar bills."

Over the ground for miles around the Fair Grounds there fell a shower of one dollar bills. This was the last thing ever heard or seen of the two men and the aeroplane.

A few weeks later Pemberton and the President of the State Fair were talking in the President's office. The President spoke:

"I have had two different planes up since Kidwell and Dexter were lost. The men went armed with shot guns and prepared for trouble. They were unable to find any upward current of air and they cruised all around in search of it. I am informed, though, that such a current would not necessarily always be in the same place, else it might stop altogether, just like winds near the earth. I have given up hope of anybody reaching the scene of the awful tragedy above."

"If there ever was an awful tragedy above," Pemberton added. The President looked at him in blank surprise.

"What?"

"I say if there ever was an awful tragedy above—if Kidwell and Dexter ever did get over two or three miles high."

"What? Don't you think that Kidwell and Dexter were killed by the monsters many miles above the earth, as they described? Why do you think they weren't?"

Pemberton slowly answered:

"I don't know what to think. There is no reason for my doubting the truth of their death miles above the earth. I have gone over it all hundreds of times, yet I can not make up my mind whether far above float the remains of two of the bravest men, or whether far away on the earth's surface are two of the slickest rascals that ever lived. Did what Dexter described really happen or did they fly above out of our sight and concoct the story? Did they cast down an oxygen tank, smear blood on a piece of plane that they might have taken with them for the purpose, and cast it down to fool us? A small cut on a finger might have furnished the blood, and they might have cast down part of the stolen money. Why did only one-dollar bills come down? Where are the half-million dollars of large bills? They *could* be floating far above with the wrecked plane. Where is the upward whirlwind? Still, it might have moved or died out. We might have listened to one of the most awful death struggles, or we might have been the victims of one of the cleverest jokes ever played on the public. And the men escaped with half a million dollars. Who knows?"

THE END.



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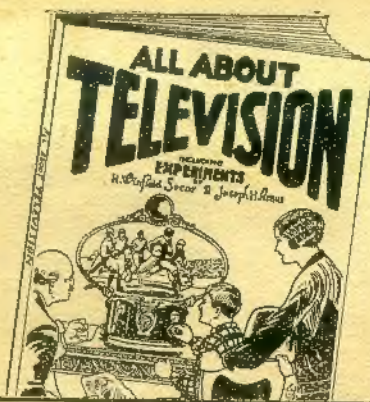
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